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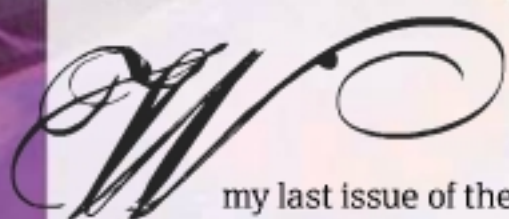




# Welcome

Discover Julie  
Dillon's award-  
winning art on p8

## WELCOME TO FANTASY ARTIST



elcome to a very  
special issue of  
**Fantasy Artist**. This is

my last issue of the magazine – I'm moving to  
our sister title *Digital Photographer*.

As this is the last time that I put together an issue of  
the magazine I wanted to make it a really special  
one, and showcase some of the things that I think are  
the most important for fantasy artists to get right.

I think good environmental design is crucial in  
pulling off truly great fantasy, so there's a feature on  
that on p30. I love the weird, off-kilter beauty of  
manga and spooky Asian folktales, so those are  
combined on p38. Alternate history is a fantastic  
sub-genre of fantasy, and nothing represents that  
quite as well as steampunk (p44). Frank Frazetta is  
arguably the Da Vinci of fantasy, so there's an  
in-depth study of his style on p50. Quests are another  
fantasy staple, so on p56 we dissect how an image  
can tell a story effectively. And what would a quest be  
without a wizard (p60)? While they're usually the  
good guys, as *The Avengers'* Loki has proved, the  
baddies are still the most charismatic, so on p64 we  
examine how to paint a villain. Finally, we take a  
look at the importance of historical and real-world  
references in scenic design on p70, which brings us  
back to the ultimate goal of fantasy: the creation of  
wonder, and the suspension of disbelief.

It has been a true pleasure to create and curate  
this magazine and its predecessors for the past four  
years. I'll miss all of you and  
your fabulous creative work, so  
do pop by and see me over at  
[www.dphotographer.co.uk](http://www.dphotographer.co.uk)!



April

## Get in touch with the team



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For more advice and inspiration, plus the  
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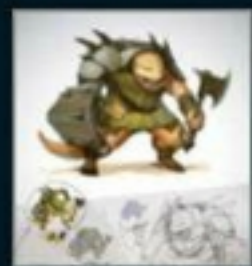
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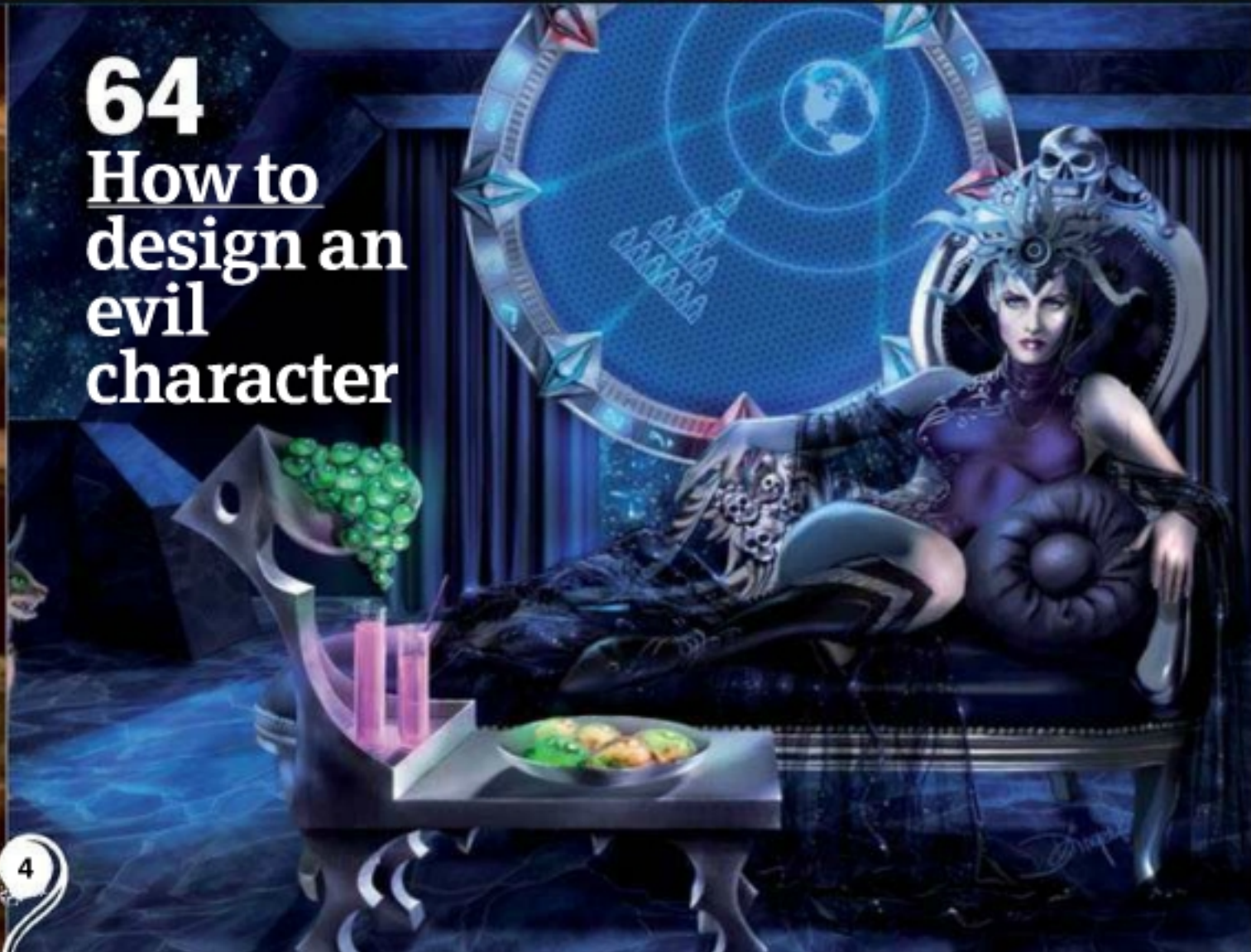
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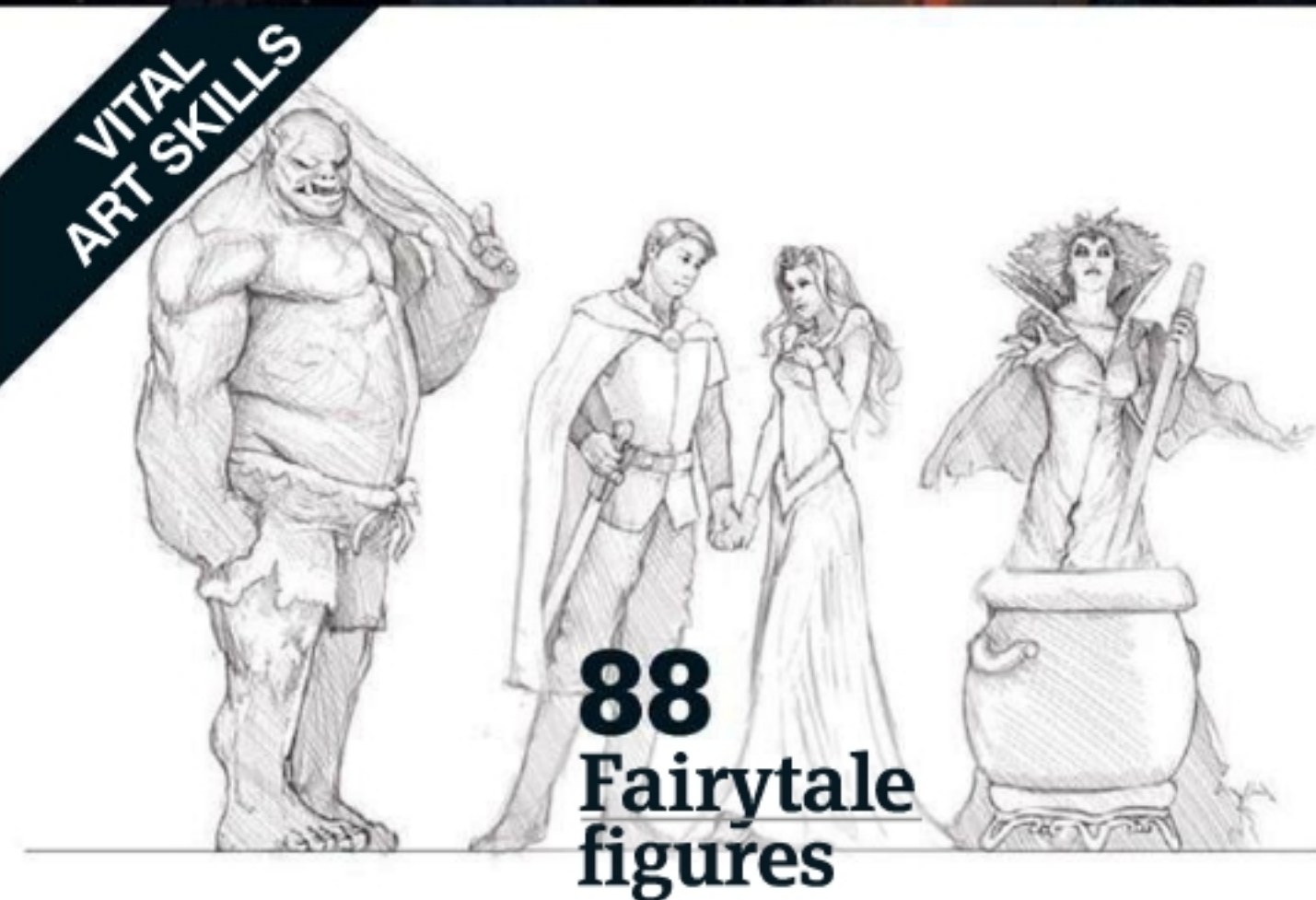




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[schin-art.com](http://schin-art.com)



Discover how you can draw and paint dark but cute manga characters and scenes with Schin's cover tutorial starting over on p38.

## John Malcolm

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Get steamed up with John's alternate-history tutorial. Learn how to extrapolate on the technology of the Victorian era to create steampunk on p44.

## Tony Foti

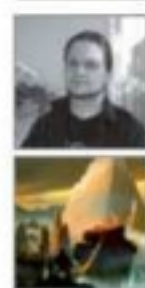
[www.tonyfotiart.com](http://www.tonyfotiart.com)



Paint like the grandmaster of fantasy art in this tutorial from Tony, who teaches us how to re-create Frazetta's style on p50.

## Jukka Rajaniemi

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Go on a quest with Jukka to discover how to show characters on a journey and their path through the landscape on p56.

## Benjamin Mounsey

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Create a magical character with Ben as he examines the iconography of one of fantasy's most loved archetypes, the wizard, on p60.

## Drazenka Kimpel

[www.creative dust.com](http://www.creative dust.com)



Go over to the Dark Side with Drazenka as she explains how to create a character who is both beautiful and evil in her tutorial starting on p64.

# The artists

Meet this issue's collection of experts

## Alexander Thümmler

[www.minzketchbook.com](http://www.minzketchbook.com)



Alex explores ancient civilisations as he explains how mysterious ruins and archaeology can inspire fantasy architecture on p70.

## Rory Doona

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Rory kicks off our Art Skills section this issue as he talks us through how you can add a wind effect to a landscape for an anime look, on p76.

## Huguette Pizzic

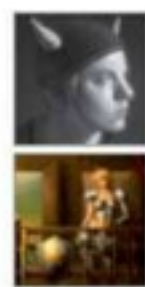
[huguettepizzic.com](http://huguettepizzic.com)



Kids love cute but creepy scenes, so Huguette gets into the Halloween spirit to explain how to create them in her guide on p78.

## George Patsouras

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Get a quick rundown of how to paint some of the basic medieval-style weapons and armour that inform fantasy battle scenes over on p80.

## Robyn Drayson

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Learn how an effective background can tell a story and define a character in a subtle way that's nonetheless full of impact, on p82.

## Louise Meijer

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Discover some of the mythical creatures based on the equine form and how you can create them quickly and easily in the guide on p84.

## Nadia Asserzon

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Create faerie art with a difference by incorporating manga elements. Nadia explains how it's done in her quick-fix guide on p86.

## Giuseppe Di Girolamo

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Create art happily ever after with Giuseppe's rundown of the essential fairytale characters and how to pose them on p88.

## Marcial P Niebres Jr

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The end of the world arrives as Marcial talks us through his image of the Norse apocalypse Ragnarok. Find out how it was painted over on p92.

# Fantasy Artist

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### Photo Studio

Studio equipment courtesy of Lastolite ([www.lastolite.co.uk](http://www.lastolite.co.uk))

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☎ (UK) 0844 848 8410

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13 issue subscription (UK) – £62.40

13 issue subscription (Europe) – £70

13 issue subscription (ROW) – £80

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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, 26 Planetary Road, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 3XT

Distributed in the UK & Eire by: Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT. Tel 0207 429 4000

Distributed in Australia by: Gordon & Gotch, Equinox Centre, 18 Rodborough Road, Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086. Tel + 61 2 9972 8800

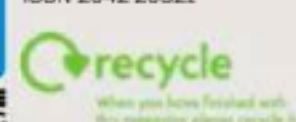
Distributed in the Rest of the World by: Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU. Tel 0203 148 8105

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# Award-winning fantasy

With a Chesley Award under her belt and now a World Fantasy Award nomination, Julie Dillon is one of fantasy art's leading lights

## JULIE DILLON

Artist info



[www.juliedillonart.com](http://www.juliedillonart.com)

Julie Dillon is an award-winning fantasy illustrator. Her clients include Wizards of the Coast, Tor Books, Paizo Publishing, Fantasy Flight Games and more.









Considering her talent and affinity for colour and composition, Julie Dillon is surprisingly modest about her skill. Yet her award-winning art is excellent, so we delved a little deeper into her story.

## **Tell us about yourself – what is your background?**

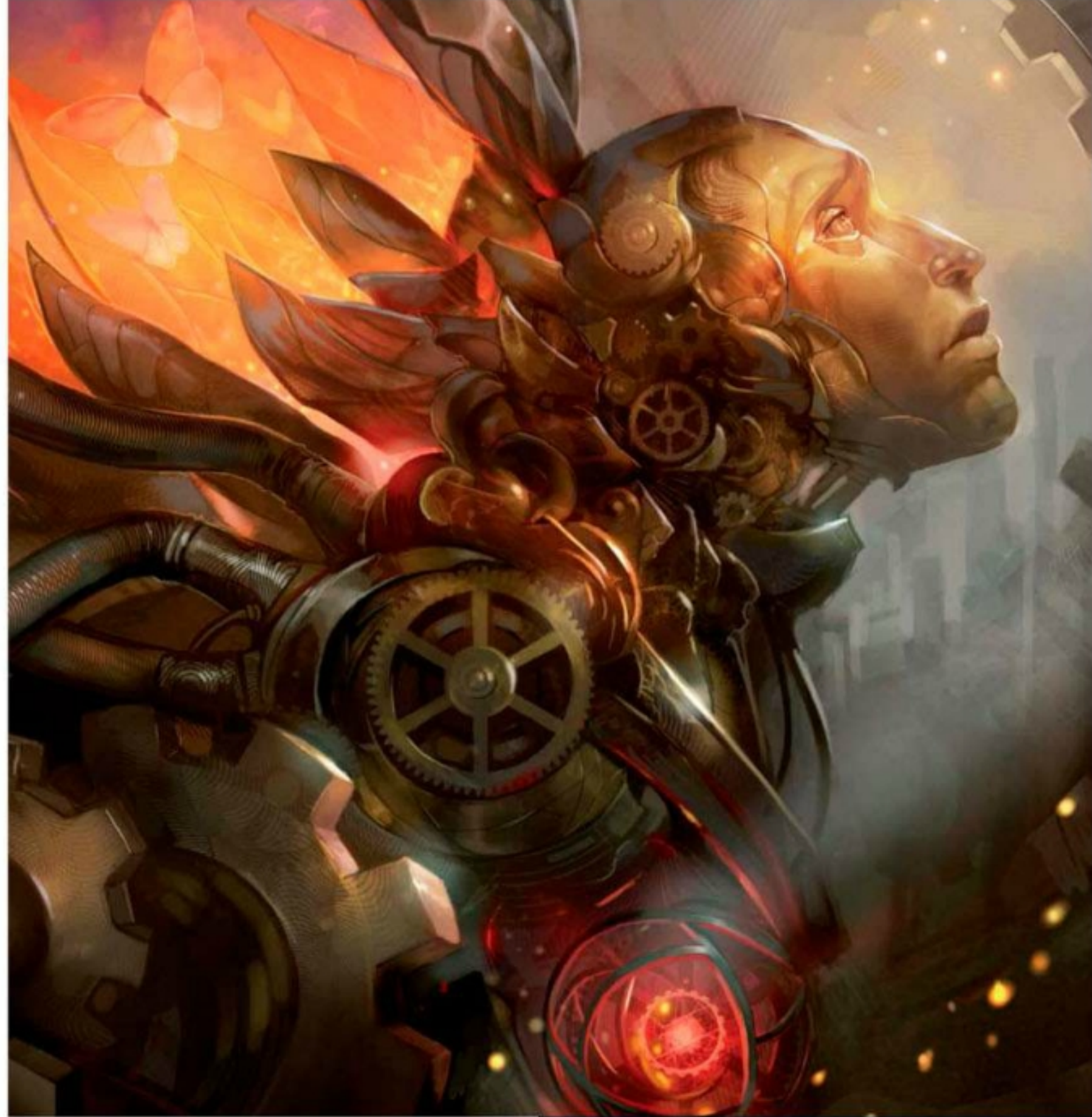
I feel like I had a late start when it comes to art. I drew a lot when I was younger but I didn't believe that I could ever be good enough to do it professionally, so it never entered my mind to go to art school or take art classes. I always considered art as just a hobby because it seemed as though everyone knew you couldn't make money doing art. Instead, I spent all my time working on my backup plan of computer science, which I never excelled at. I'd spend all my calculus lectures doodling in the margins of my notebooks, and eventually I realised that I cared about painting and drawing too much to not give it a real try. I also realised that if you spend all your time working on your backup plan then it's no longer a backup plan – it's your career. I had a ton of ideas for paintings but I wasn't very technically skilled, so I started taking classes at my local community college in my early twenties and then transferred to my local university to get my BFA. The art programme at my university was so awful and outright antagonistic that I almost gave up. I finally found out about a good art school within a few hours drive of where I lived. It was expensive, so I could only afford a class or two every semester or so, but it really helped me to start learning about the fundamentals of drawing, and I could finally start making my ideas into actual illustrations. From there, I started getting freelance work, which I used to pay for more classes. Now, my freelance work has finally gotten to a more stable point and, even though I haven't been able to attend full semester classes, I still try to attend figure drawing and painting workshops a few times a year to help me improve.

## **How would you describe your style?**

My style is and always has been the result of not being able to paint as well as I wish I could. I still struggle with anatomy and realistic rendering, so the way I paint reflects both the limitations of my ability and my attempts to mask my limitations with bright colours, flowing compositions and an attempt at storytelling. Composition, colour and storytelling have always come more easily to me than learning technical skill and draughtsmanship, so I tend to lean more heavily on them while I slowly build up my weaker areas. My goal is to eventually be able to have a truly solid knowledge of anatomy and rendering that I can couple with my colour sense and storytelling, so that they work together.

## **When did you first start creating artwork and when did you first start work in the art industry?**

I've been drawing all my life but I began creating published work in the early 2000s. I started off doing a little work for anime RPG books and a videogame project that, unfortunately, never quite got off the ground. My artwork at the time wasn't all that great



but I was just excited to be helping with projects, and this was at a time when not too many Western artists were working in the anime style (whereas now tons of people do it). After that, I took a lot of time off (aside from private commissions) while I went to school and briefly dabbled in a few other career options. After I had sat down and focused on my art training more seriously for a few years, I began doing freelance illustration full-time in 2006, starting with quarter-page illustrations for Pinnacle Entertainment Group and moving my way up bit by bit. From there, I've slowly worked towards gaining new clients and just doing the best I can overall.

## **What or who are your primary influences?**

I am very strongly influenced by other fantasy artists; not just because of their art, but because of their careers and the way that they go about their work. Currently, my favourite artists are Jon Foster, for his dynamic compositions and ability to abstract and warp a scene to help aid the narrative of his illustrations; Donato Giancola, for his superb draughtsmanship, solid compositions and his obvious passion for the craft; and Sam Weber, for his incredible draughtsmanship and his ability to seamlessly integrate graphic elements and abstraction within his illustrations. There are countless other artists I admire but I have to say that those are my current top three. I know I'll never reach their level, but I strive to learn from them and others and be the best that I can. Seeing their work continue to grow and develop just keeps inspiring me to do better as well.

● **Artificial Dream (above), 2010**  
**Photoshop** An old sketch that I finally finished up

● **Sea, Sun, Stars (right), 2011**  
**Photoshop** A personal illustration – the last piece of artwork I did in 2011

● **Surface (below), 2008**  
**Photoshop** A personal piece. I was really pleased with the quality of my draughtsmanship in this one





“ Sometimes, the storyline is the main reason that I wanted to create the image and I have it planned out beforehand ”







● **Gold Sea (above), 2009**

**Photoshop, Painter** I struggled with using Painter at first, but a tutorial by Andrew Jones really inspired me and this is the result

● **Planetary Alignment (above right), 2010 Photoshop** This was a personal entry for a competition. It didn't win but it did get a Daily Deviation on deviantART

● **Treasure from the Deep (right), 2011 Photoshop** A personal piece – I hadn't finished one in a while at the time. I initially changed the colours in this one when I showed it online but then switched it back

**When did you first get into fantasy and sci-fi? Can you remember what first piqued your interest?**

I've always been inclined towards fantasy, in part because it got me through a lot of the more tedious and depressing parts of school and adolescence; it gave me something to focus on other than how much I hated my school. I remember that the films *Watership Down* and *The Dark Crystal* were early childhood favourites, along with a lot of miscellaneous fantasy cartoons. Due to my limited school library, I didn't discover fantasy and sci-fi literature until middle school, at which point I read everything I could find. *Magic: The Gathering* cards and book covers introduced me to world of fantasy and sci-fi art. Michael Whelan illustrated some of my favourite book covers and Anson Maddocks and Quinton Hoover produced my favourite *Magic: The Gathering* cards, so these became early favourites. Once I had internet access, finding out about new artists and authors became exponentially easier.

**What are your favourite fantasy subjects and why?**

I like painting scenes that show fantastical creatures, and also people being human – grounded and real – and in their downtime rather than constantly fighting. I don't always get the chance to do that kind of work but I enjoy it when I do. I also like working on illustrations showing overlaps between the everyday world and the fantastical, where the mundane is made a little less dreary and the fantastic a little less unreal. I also definitely like getting to do illustrations with women and girls getting to be actual people instead of props or set dressing, where they get to be

the heroes in their own stories and wear clothing that makes sense for the task at hand. But all that aside, when I get right down to it, I have to say that I really like drawing robots and dragons. And various underwater creatures. You can't go wrong with robots and dragons and underwater critters.

**Colour is a major feature in your work and something that's mentioned by everyone who loves your images. Can you tell us a bit more about your approach to using colour?**

Colour is the one aspect of art that I believe I have an intuitive feel for. Everything else, from perspective to anatomy to shading, has been a struggle, but colour and composition have come more easily for me. It can be difficult to explain why I chose a certain colour other than to say that it felt 'right'. I always start with a greyscale sketch to get the value pattern down. I then try to block in a simple colour scheme with two or three colours, to get the overall theme, and add subtleties as I go. Whenever I come across a painting or photo with a colour scheme that resonates with me, I file it in my reference folders to inspire me when I'm stuck or, more often, if I can't make up my mind on what kind of colour scheme I want. I know that people respond to bright colours and strong complementary colour schemes, so I always use that as my starting point; I can tone the colours down later if I need to. I usually know in the early stages of a sketch if it needs to be blue with gold highlights, or orange and purple, or green and yellow. The more I stick to relatively straightforward colour schemes, the stronger and less cluttered the result tends to be.



## “ I definitely like getting to do illustrations with women and girls ”

**What advice would you give to *Fantasy Artist* readers who are struggling with managing colour in their work?**

My best advice is to work in greyscale first to figure out your value pattern – your lights and darks. When you do move to colour, keep it simple. Figure out a simple colour scheme and stick to it. I see a lot of artists filling in patches of colour without seeing how all the colours work together, and I can tell you from experience that it gets tricky if you go in with a ton of different colours that don't work together. Simple, clean colour schemes are easier and tend to be more eye-catching. The main thing you want to keep in mind is the difference between the local colour and the perceived colour of an object. The local colour is the physical colour of an object without the influence of shadows or highlights, while the perceived colour is the colour that your eye actually sees. For example, if you had a white box and a red box, you may know in your head that their local colours are white and red, but if they are placed in shadow or coloured light then the perceived colour of the white box might be a dark yellow or blue, and the red might end up being a desaturated grey. So don't paint an object's local colour; paint its perceived colour – what you actually see and not what you think an object should be. If it's a night scene flooded with blue moonlight, that white box is going to take on a darker, pale blue tone. If it is next to a lit fireplace, it's going to take on a red-orange glow. Understanding this helps you to unify the colours in a painting and lets you have a variety of objects that look like they belong together in the same space, rather than a hodgepodge of patchy colour all over the scene that only describes the local colour of the subjects.

**What are your favourite digital and traditional mediums or software to work in, and why?**

I enjoy painting with oils when I can, although I'm not good enough with them yet to get the same results that I achieve digitally. With oils, I love the creaminess and the ability to move paint around, but I still have a hard time managing it and I haven't been putting in enough practice to improve. Personally, I prefer to work digitally because it doesn't require any clean-up, prep or the continual purchasing of new art supplies (aside from computer and software upgrades). The downside to working digitally is, of course, that I don't have a physical original copy of my illustrations, like I would if I worked in oils. If I want to put my work in an art show, I have to make prints; I don't have an original to hang or sell. In terms of software, Photoshop CS3 has been my go-to program. I know that there are newer versions but CS3 has been serving me well. I use Painter sometimes, as there are several brushes I really enjoy that I can't replicate in Photoshop, but the majority of my painting is done in Photoshop.

**Do you combine traditional and digital media in your work?**

I used to sketch my illustrations with paper and pencil and then add colour digitally, but I've gotten used to sketching digitally, so I now do virtually all my work on the computer. For me, it's much faster and gives me more flexibility: I can quickly copy and paste parts of a drawing, move them around, flip them back and forth. I have a notebook that I will do thumbnail sketches and brainstorming in but that's about it. I've found that for the brainstorming phase it helps if I have physical paper to work with (it also helps being away from the distracting computer). I will also use traditional media when doing studies. Every now and then, if I do a charcoal study of a model from a life drawing class, then I'll scan it in and add colour to it in Photoshop for fun, but I mostly work completely digitally.

**Are there digital or traditional techniques or programs you'd like to learn more about?**

For traditional techniques, I would love to learn to ink. That is just something I have never been able to get a handle on, and I think learning that kind of precise control would go a long way in terms of helping me with my overall draughtsmanship. In terms of digital techniques, I wish I was better at 3D modelling. Not only is that a marketable skill for an illustrator but it'd be nice to have the ability to make digital maquettes for my paintings. I know a lot of illustrators and concept artists build 3D models of creatures or architecture that they then paint on top of in order to create their designs.

**Do you plan pieces in advance or do you generate images in a more spontaneous, organic way?**

I do both. Some pieces are meticulously planned out with thumbnails and tight sketches, but with others I dive right into a blank canvas with random brush shapes and see what happens. I've gotten good results both ways and I think there are benefits to both. Planning out a composition with sketches lets you identify problems and solutions early on and streamline the process. Working spontaneously without any planning challenges you to think on your toes and try to pull an image out of thin air on the first try. Sometimes, I'll make a spontaneous sketch and like the concept that comes out of it but not the execution, so I'll take it back to brainstorming and revamp the composition until I get it right. I wouldn't have had the original core idea without diving right into that blank canvas at first, though.

**Once you've settled on a composition, do you have a set workflow?**

Years of juggling commissions have forced me to develop a more disciplined workflow than I used to have. I used to just start painting straight away using





“Whenever my workload drops off, I always try to make sure that I’m working on and putting out new portfolio pieces”





● **Life in Motion, 2010**

**Photoshop** This was created for a contest on art.com. It ended up winning and was awarded a Daily Deviation on deviantART

● **Breaking Through (left), 2012**

**Photoshop** This was partly inspired by a conversation I had at a recent sci-fi/fantasy convention about working with abstracted elements, bold colours and iconic imagery

● **Honeycomb (below), 2010**

**Photoshop** This one is a personal piece that I sold as prints at San Diego Comic-Con in 2010



colour but without much in terms of thumbnails, and my illustrations would take ages to complete. Now, I always start with thumbnail sketches and proceed from there to doing a detailed greyscale painting of the piece to work out the value pattern. Once that is approved by the client (or myself, if it is a personal piece), then I add colour using a Hard Light layer in Photoshop. Once I have the basic colour scheme mapped out, I start in on the actual painting. I try to stagger my projects so that while I'm waiting for feedback from one client, I can be working on something for another client and there is no dead time spent waiting. Sometimes, it can take a while to get feedback or approval, so it's important that I use that downtime to catch up on other projects. If I don't have other projects then I get to work on a piece for myself. Whenever my workload drops off, I always try to make sure that I'm working on and putting out new portfolio pieces to help attract new clients.

**Each of your images implies a storyline happening beyond the moment that you've captured. Do you plan out this story beforehand or do you prefer to spark the viewer's imagination and let them create a backstory for a piece?**

Sometimes, the storyline is the main reason that I wanted to create the image and I have it planned out beforehand. Other times, the story doesn't come to me until I'm a ways into the piece and something finally clicks. I don't usually fill an entire backstory, though, as long as I can make the narrative of the image work on its own. My illustrations hint at stories but don't have fleshed out narratives attached to

them (unless, of course, it's an illustration for someone else's story). I like to leave things up to the viewer to decide. I feel that if I give them a hint of a story in a picture, it invites them to spend more time with the piece and maybe get more enjoyment out of it beyond just appreciating the visual aspects

**You've won one of the most prestigious awards in fantasy illustration, a Chesley Award; this year you've been nominated for the big one, a World Fantasy Award. How does that make you feel? Did you imagine when you first started out that you would achieve this?**

I still can't quite wrap my head around it. In my mind, I'm still at least five years away from being at the point in my career that warrants any nominations. It doesn't feel right that I'm receiving this kind of recognition when I'm not nearly on the same level as a lot of my favourite artists. I'm incredibly honoured and humbled, but honestly I'm hoping things die down for a little bit to give me a chance to improve my work enough to the point that I actually deserve these honours!

**Finally, what are your plans for the future?**

My plans are relatively vague. If I had the money, I'd love to take some time off to go back and train more intensively to help me improve my portraiture and draughtsmanship. In terms of work, I'd love to do an illustrated book of my own in the next few years. Beyond that, I just want to keep painting, keep creating, keep learning and keep doing the best I can, and see where it leads me.





# Community

Get in touch with the Fantasy Artist team  
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## Discover comics superheroes

US exhibition celebrates once of comics' most iconic characters and the artist that brought him to life

**Most of us know Flash Gordon from the cult-classic 1980 film.** The all-American hero (now in his 78th year) already had a backstory stretching back nearly half a century even then. Now an exhibition entitled *Flash Gordon and the Heroes of the Universe* is on show at the Stamford Museum and Nature Center in New England, and it uncovers some of the early history of the character and the artists who created him.

Stamford is a fitting backdrop for a character who was a Connecticut boy himself, and for showcasing the work of his creator, Alex Raymond, a New Yorker – “We like to highlight connections to Stamford and the Fairfield County area,” explains Robin Wexler, director of media relations and marketing at the Museum. “And Alex Raymond lived in Stamford.” Working during the mid-Thirties, Raymond was tasked with coming up with a character that could compete on the newsstands with sci-fi hero Buck Rogers. In contrast to the rival character’s decidedly blue-collar background, Raymond took inspiration from the affluent, highly educated society of Stamford to come up with polo-playing Yale graduate and sci-fi adventurer Flash Gordon.

The storyline most of us know kicks off with Gordon and love interest Dale Arden being kidnapped by the troubled Doctor Zarkov and transported to the planet of Mongo,

ruled by the despotic Ming the Merciless. Throughout the long-running series Flash and his companions explore the world of Mongo, visiting jungles, deserts, underwater kingdoms and outer space. During the process, Alex Raymond began to develop the idea of comic art as a unique skill set in its own right; a sea change that revolutionised the way that comics were developed, written and drawn. And as the long-running storyline evolved it started to draw in motifs from myths and legends as well as political commentary, scientific breakthroughs and social questions, becoming the founding father of the epic story arcs we’re used to now.

*Flash Gordon* rapidly became an iconic strip, with its luscious art and clever storylines, and its lead character was a precursor to the archetype of the superhero that we know and love today. Both the character and his creator have had such an influence on the comics industry – and by extension, movies and TV – that an exhibition dedicated to their game-changing influence is long overdue.

“Flash Gordon and the Heroes of the Universe showcases artwork by two of the finest Flash Gordon illustrators, Alex Raymond and Al Williamson, as well as numerous other science fiction cartoonists,” Robin Wexler says of the show, which is curated by cartoonist and historian Brian Walker. “The artwork and memorabilia on display,

representing space-adventure creations from *Buck Rogers* to *Star Wars*, provides evidence of the significant impact that these heroes of the universe have had on American culture. *Flash Gordon...* has impacted countless science fiction creators including George Lucas. Lucas claims, “Had it not been for Alex Raymond and Flash Gordon, there might not have been a *Star Wars*.”

● Learn more at [www.stamfordmuseum.org](http://www.stamfordmuseum.org)





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Flash Gordon was created in 1934 to rival the success of *Buck Rogers*. The strip ended up outselling its competitor and becoming a key influence on the development of comic and sci-fi art



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Flash Gordon and the Heroes of the Universe collates art from the inception and development of the character as well as examples of the wide-ranging influence the strip has had



The character has proved popular from his inception to the present day, with many iconic spin-off products, films and anthologies





This month we're taking a look at the most popular submissions over the past four weeks



Sigh of Moon by dark134 ([dark134.deviantart.com](https://dark134.deviantart.com)) is a beautifully simplistic fantasy piece that the artist claims was inspired by the Moon.



We love finding original characters and so when we first saw Dragon Knight by takayamatoshiaki ([takayamatoshiaki.deviantart.com](https://takayamatoshiaki.deviantart.com)) it was instantly added to our favourites.



Angel of Colors, by Artgerm ([artgerm.deviantart.com](https://artgerm.deviantart.com)) is yet another stunning and distinctive artwork by one of our most popular artists at deviantART.

As the seasons progress, look out for the festive-themed artwork that will shortly be hitting the site. Until then – stay devious!

Fiona Balsillie, director of community operations  
[deviantART.com](https://deviantART.com) | [fiona@deviantart.com](mailto:fiona@deviantart.com)



## Artist Spotlight Alexander Forssberg

Helped on his artistic journey by Dave Rapoza's Crimson Daggers, Alexander Forssberg looks forward to a long creative career



24-year-old Swede Alex Forssberg started freelancing six or seven months ago, after studying art for several years. One thing that has really helped him in his artistic journey has been the support and encouragement of study group the Crimson Daggers ([www.crimsondaggers.com](http://www.crimsondaggers.com), featured in Fantasy Artist 38).

"I started taking art seriously when I found artist Dave Rapoza's Crimson Daggers about three years ago," Alex explains. "I've been a trusty Dagger ever since. Not only did it teach me about art and how and what to do to get better, but [Crimson Daggers] also introduced me to the world of illustration and concept art. And most important of all I got to know a lot of cool people, not only other Daggers that were studying together with me, but also industry professionals."

Able to turn his hand to a variety of styles ("I think it's easier for other people to break down your style, I just try to paint the best pictures I can"), Alex is ambitious about his future and passionate about creativity. "I would like to continue working as a freelance artist full-time, moving on to bigger clients within fantasy and sci-fi; maybe some day branching out into movies and games," he says, adding "Really, I just want to have a long and happy life as a painter, always learning new stuff."

Discover more of Alex Forssberg's art at [www.alexson.se](http://www.alexson.se)





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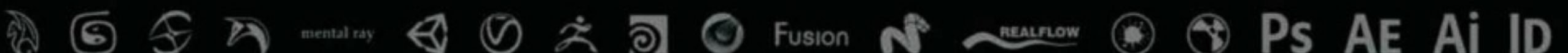
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Mishibizhiw, 2012  
"I was trying to suggest the lighting of an overcast day"

Bird's Eye View, 2011  
"I think I was getting better at lighting at this point"

Holly Honey Beast, 2012  
"This forest spirit hosts a hive of bees in his gullet"



## Artist retrospective

Artist info



**KATE PFEILSCHIFTER**  
[www.katepfeilschifterart.com](http://www.katepfeilschifterart.com)

An aspiring concept artist and creature designer, Kate Pfeilschifter is a student in Redmond, WA, attending the Digipen Institute of Art and Technology. She's obsessed with all manner of dragons and beasts. A love for anatomy and biology aids in creating these improbable monstrosities and the strange worlds she builds for them to thrive in.

### Mishibizhiw 2012, Photoshop

● The Mishibizhiw is a powerful creature from Native American mythology, described as an aquatic chimerical panther. For this image I was trying to suggest the lighting of an overcast day over a murky, hazy lake. I often find myself accidentally using too much colour; I think I was able to break out of the habit for this image.

### Bird's Eye View 2011, Photoshop

● The Steller's Jay is one of my favourite birds and Bird's Eye View was initially just going to be a painting of a Steller's Jay. The idea of adding the bloody eye and the awful puns came a bit later. I think I was getting better with lighting techniques at this point, or I was at least getting better at painting the bird's shiny feathers.





Marking Territory, 2011  
"Dragons might burn the tops of trees to mark territory"

Have a Heart, 2012  
"Maybe it's a demon, maybe some strange parasite"

Tangrisnir, 2012  
"I've been developing creatures for a world-building project"

Bull Black-Tongue, 2012  
"This creature is a spontaneous experiment with shapes"



## Holly Honey Beast

2012, **Photoshop**  
● Holly Honey Beast was a commissioned painting. This forest spirit hosts a hive of bees in his gullet, the honey of which grants him magical powers. I usually start a painting with a sketch, and then go right into the colour. For this one, however, I painted in greyscale and applied colour later with an Overlay layer.

## Marking Territory

2011, **Photoshop**  
● This sketch turned out surprisingly well for something that was started on a whim. I saw an image of a white cockatoo and then painted this shortly afterwards. I was wondering about all the different ways an animal could make use of fire, and then thought dragons might burn the tops of trees as a way of marking territory.

## Have a Heart

2012, **Photoshop**  
● Sometimes I get really weird ideas for a painting by listening to music. And more often than not that painting has nothing at all to do with the song. So this guy was fairly spontaneous. Maybe it's a demon, maybe some strange parasite that replaces the heart of its host. I'm leaving it open to interpretation.

## Tangrisnir

2012, **Photoshop**  
● I've been developing creatures for a personal world-building project. Some are new, others are reiterations of classic mythological animals. The Tangrisnir is inspired by a goat of the same name, which pulled Thor's chariot in Norse mythology. Here I tried for a lighting scheme observed in photos of mountain goats on high precipices.

## Bull Black-Tongue

2012, **Photoshop**  
● I'm heavily inspired by Wayne D Barlowe; if any artist ever drew a creature that could be believed to come from another world it's him. That said, this creature is a spontaneous experiment with shapes. He navigates through scent, sound and heat alone, and uses his prehensile tongue for all of his food-gathering needs.





● Mad Scientist's Abomination by Joshua Otero

## Artist Spotlight Joshua Otero

Specialising in character creation, this illustrator aims to work in the animation industry



When asked to describe his style, 29-year-old US-based illustrator Joshua Otero says "cartoons are my passion". He expands: "From whimsical to cute and cuddly. I would say my style is leaning towards a painterly style using light and form."

Such a painterly yet cartoonish style is often associated with animation, and indeed that's where Joshua has set his sights. "My ambition is to enter the animation industry as an animator, visual developer or character designer. Pretty much anything involving characters and their development," he says. This love for character design is vividly expressed in his work: each figure has a distinct personality and emotional intensity. These are valuable aspects of his character's design that enable the audience to read them instantly.

With a good basis in digital and traditional skills – "Photoshop is my bread and butter, however I do dabble in traditional mediums such as watercolour, ink and acrylic" – Joshua is ideally placed to enter the concept art industry, and indeed this might be the best fit for him, especially when it comes to working with the cutesy styling's and over-the-top characterisation required for children's movies. "Cartoons and children's illustrations always held a kind of wonder for me. Just like children whose imagination is enormous and vivid, I too want to share that same idea with everyone."

● Find out more about Joshua's work at [www.joshuaotero.com](http://www.joshuaotero.com)





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## Readers' gallery

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### Featured artists



#### Yigit Koroglu

[www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/yigit](http://www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/yigit)

"I'm an artist from Turkey creating fantasy and sci-fi themed images."



#### Mominur Rahman

[www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/tree\\_jammer](http://www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/tree_jammer)

"I am a Hertfordshire-based freelance illustrator with a particular interest in fantasy and sci-fi artwork."



#### Nicholas Hong

[www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/Nickhong](http://www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/Nickhong)

"I always look for knowledge, and I learn from life and nature."



#### Julien Poisson

[www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/Pezcado](http://www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/Pezcado)

"I'm 21-years old and studying graphic design in Montreal. I have a passion for drawing and illustration!"



#### Alonzo Emata

[www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/artofalonzo](http://www.digitalartistdaily.com/user/artofalonzo)

"I started to draw when I was four. I developed my skills by entering art contests throughout my life."

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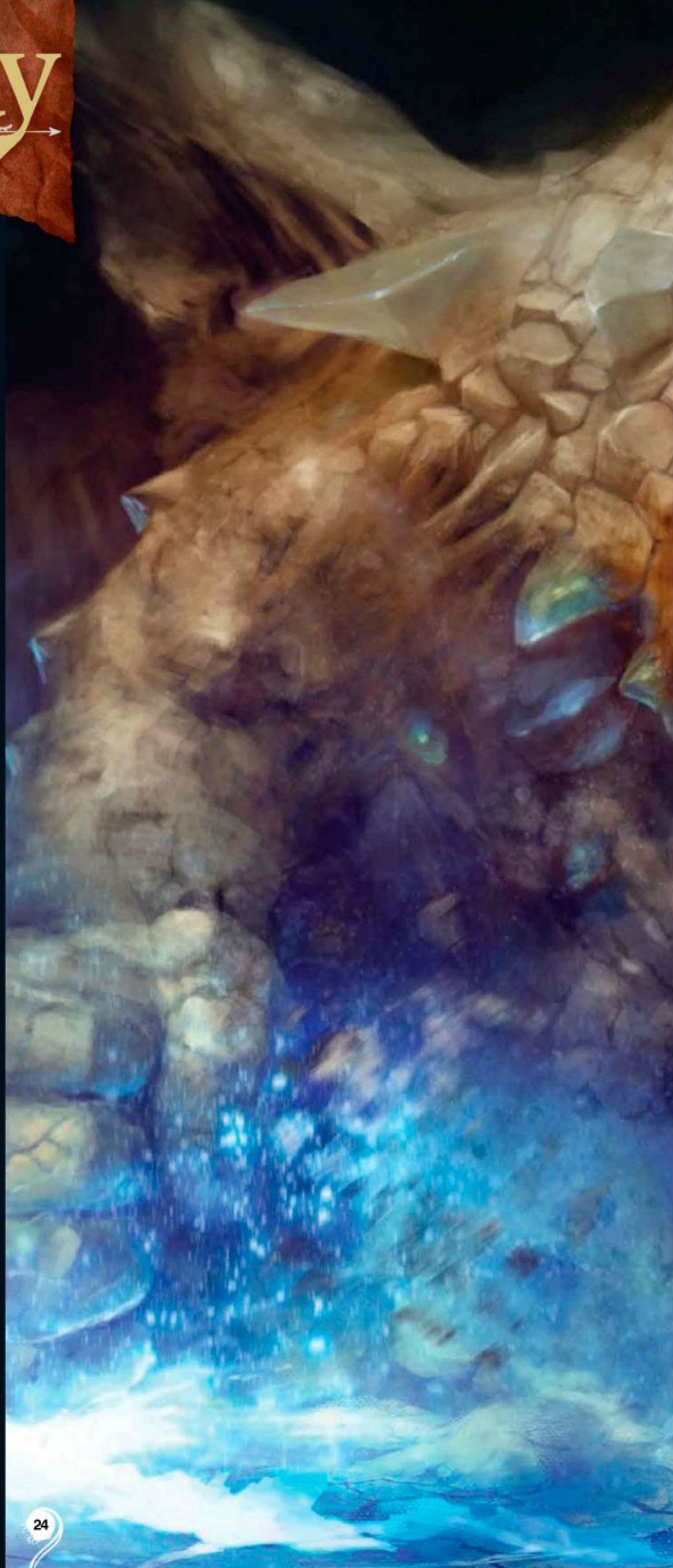
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● **Earth Colossus, 2011**

**Yigit Koroglu** Photoshop

"This image was done for a contest called 'Create a Colossus'. Artists chose one of six planar themes and created a colossus based on it for Trion Worlds' famed MMORPG Rift."





# Community



● **Forest Golem, 2011**  
**Mominur Rahman**  
Photoshop

"This image depicts a witch walking through a forest guarded by her tree golem. The image was an exercise in lighting with the strong backlight cascading through the trees and the illumination of the witch's magic staff."





● **Yaho, 2012 Nicholas Hong** Photoshop

"The reason I gave it this title is because I recalled a memory when I climbed up a mountain with my dad when I was kid, and I yelled with all my energy 'Yaho!' when I breathed in; there was tremendous sense of being harmonised with nature. I hope these two little creatures feel the same way I did."

● **Hands in hand, 2010 Julien Poisson** Photoshop

"At first, it was only a study of hands. But then I had the idea of creating a giant hand made out of hands. There are more than 100 different hands and 40 hours of work in this illustration."

● **Enchanted Forest Lights, 2012 Alonzo Emata** Photoshop

"The painting started as training, it's a personal work to enhance my eye for choosing colours and storytelling by means of illustration. I was trying to make a cartoon-style artwork that looked like what I saw in Pixar movies. The setting was all about a hidden place, a habitat of fairies and mythical small creatures. And there are precious stones that give light to this hidden place."



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## Artist Spotlight Sandra Chlewinska

Also known as Razuri-chan, this 22-year-old Polish artist is a dab hand at manga-style artwork



Sandra Chlewinska, aka Razuri-chan, has ambition to match her talent. The 22-year-old Pole has been publishing her art online since the age of fourteen, although she says she didn't really get serious about the subject until she was 20. "I've been publishing my works online since 2004, but it was just for fun," she explains. "It's only been a few years since I started thinking of art as a career. I think 2010 would be [when I seriously started illustrating] because that's when my first collaborative art book was created and published. I was very proud and happy about it as an artist!" She has since completed another collaborative art book, and both of them – entitled *Fantasy Creatures* (featuring M Danielewicz, Margaret Chylak and Sandra Mistal) and *Hearts and Chocolate* (with Anika Rózniewicz) – are available from [www.komiksiarnia.pl](http://www.komiksiarnia.pl)

Since then she has taken on a variety of private commissions and is also a member of ougaming, an art circle that is developing a point-and-click mystery RPG called *Mitsumata*. Sandra's style – an East-meets-West hybrid of Japanese influences and European stylings – is perfectly suited to this kind of project. "I consider my style as a mix of manga, cartoon and semi-realism (however semi-realist pictures rarely show up as finished artworks in my gallery). I want my style to be fun to look at; very expressive yet quite simple," she notes.

Working across a range of different mediums, Sandra describes her specialist subject as traditional media: "Especially sketching [and] shading. I spend a lot of time drawing traditionally, because (as opposed to digital) I can do it everywhere – on the bus, at the mall. I've gained a lot of

experience from that. Also because I'm doing a lot of sketches from living models I see everyday, I think I've gained a good understanding of human anatomy," she says of her daily practise.

So how does she work? "When I work with traditional media I usually use a mechanical pencil with Pentel B leads and a black Muji eraser. I also love to use Pentel eraser pens for details and highlights. For coloured traditional illustrations I use ProMarkers and Derwent Artists colour pencils. Paper is also an important part of my work – my current favourite is my Derwent Hardback Sketchbook. I like my paper smooth and thick, with close to no texture." And like many manga-inspired Western artists, there's a certain tool that's becoming more and more useful to her: "I've always been quite fond of Photoshop, but lately I've started using PaintTool SAI and I'm very satisfied with it, especially when it comes to doing line art," she says of the Japanese program that is becoming increasingly popular with Western artists working in manga-inspired art styles.

As for Sandra's ambitions for the future, they're definitely on a par with her burgeoning talent. "I have two big dreams: my first is to publish my story *Far Beyond the World* as a comic, and the second is to work in the animation industry, at Nickelodeon, DreamWorks or Pixar. Nickelodeon especially is my focus of attention – the style of *The Legend of Korra* just encapsulates what I'm aiming for with regards to my own style. At the moment I'm trying to complete my portfolio for these companies, but at the same time I feel I'm not worthy yet!"

● Find out more about Sandra's artwork at [razuri-chan.deviantart.com](http://razuri-chan.deviantart.com)





● Double Halo Angel can be seen in Sandra's book Fantasy Creatures



# Making a scene

Think Mordor, think Hogwarts, think Tattoine. Fantasy landscapes have to be more than just magical, as **Poz Watson** explores

**F**antasy landscapes – or the environments in which fantasy takes place – are crucial to the genre's success. They set the mood and they inform the audience about the world, as well as literally giving films and games a place to play out their narrative. The depth required depends on the project. Films need digital mattes (extremely detailed and photo-real landscapes to stand behind the action) while games need interactive environments (so the character can cross that bridge or open that door).

Digital artist Jonas De Ro ([www.jonasdero.be](http://www.jonasdero.be)) creates fantasy landscapes both as illustrations, and also as concept art for games and websites. He notes that his work is "usually for illustrating or designing an environment. Basically that means developing a non-existing place not only in terms of design but also with regard to mood, lighting and composition."

Jeremy Vickery ([www.jermilex.com](http://www.jermilex.com)) works full-time for Pixar as a lighting artist, but he also does a bit of "illustrating and world creation on the side. For a few years I tried my hand at a

freelance life and found I was creating a lot of illustrations and concept designs for various clients. Some of the clients were making games and I was either creating the full environments for the actual games, or just sketching ideas to be built later. Sometimes the clients would have me do both the concept and the final art (sometimes 2D, sometimes 3D)."

Outside of the fantasy arena, landscapes can be found outside every window. They have to depict reality exactly, which can be difficult, but they don't have to create anything new. There is



### TEMPLE RUINS

This is part of a 2012 series, where Jonas De Ro used Photoshop to turn cities and places into post-apocalyptic environments. Here, even the sunlight doesn't seem comforting



### NEO-SHINJUKU

This 2012 cityscape from Jonas De Ro uses the help of Photoshop to imagine what a Tokyo-like city might look like in the future, when the existing structures have been further built upon



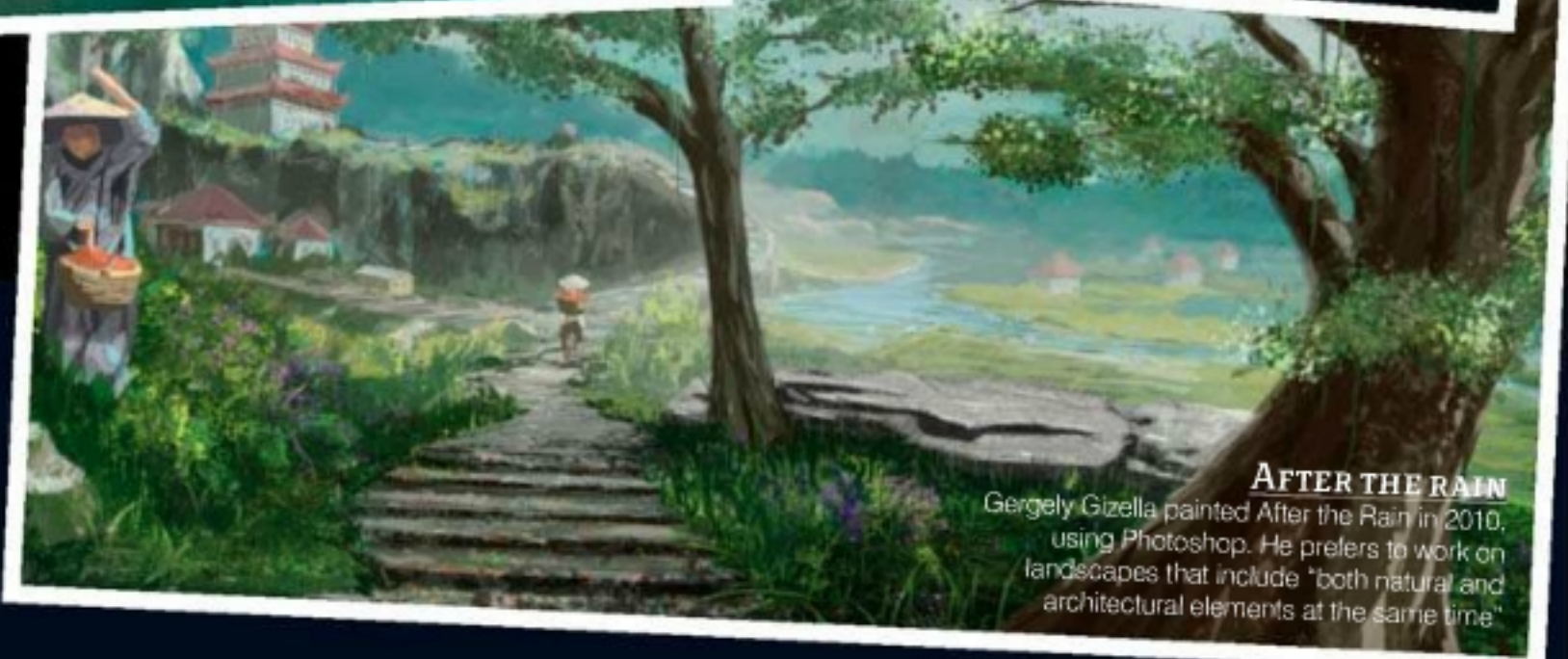
### CASTLE AND CITY WALL VILLAGE

This (2011) was created by Marta Nael in Photoshop, for the Spanish comics and posters publishers Ediciones Babylon



a massive demand for environments in film, TV and games these days, but so too is there a quest for plausibility and originality.

That's a tricky combination to accomplish. Lane Brown ([www.lanebrownart.com](http://www.lanebrownart.com)) says that one of the clichés that he sees a lot is the "tendency for artists to focus so much on making a fantasy scene 'epic' and so grand in every aspect, that the result lacks any sense of intimacy. We should focus on enriching the mundane, rather than attempting to remove it completely. Epicness is relative."



### AFTER THE RAIN

Gergely Gizella painted After the Rain in 2010, using Photoshop. He prefers to work on landscapes that include "both natural and architectural elements at the same time."





### ELEVATED MAP

Jeremy Vickery designed this magical land for a kids' TV show in 2008. His process is to start his images "with broad colours and a simple composition" that is "striking without any detail"



### EAGLE TOTEM

Ramsés Meléndez reveals a lot of the world he is depicting, by showing this Eagle Totem in a fearsome but reverential way. He created it in 2012, using Photoshop

Each landscape, and indeed each use (digital matte, concept art, interactive environment, illustration) for a landscape has its own challenges, but essentially you are asking the audience to buy into a world that you have created, so your art has to be functional, plausible, evocative and immersive. Detail is crucial to this process. If your sketch is concept art, then it also needs to convey to the person who's going to take the design on how the terrain feels, for instance. If you are working on a design for a game, then composing it so there is space for the characters to move around is absolutely critical.

Jeremy Vickery usually spends an hour or so researching an idea before he gets started, looking at other landscapes, other fantasy images and more. "Once my brain is full I start to sketch and let it all out," he says. "My brain feels like a big sponge and the more I can fill it with excellent art the better. Walking through the Musée D'Orsay in Paris was like a mind overload of goodness... so much amazing colour and composition."

Of course, landscape art – like portrait art – has been around a long time. Typified by a wide angle and epic scope, it's always depicted both towns and countries, and realism and detail has usually been important. There are two major traditions in landscape painting: the Western one, stemming from Roman and Greek frescoes; and the Chinese shan shui (mountain water) ink paintings. The latter never featured human beings, and grew in status, whereas in the West the landscape fell out of favour. It is only now, with the advent of photo-real art and its use in film and gaming that the landscape has become big business, rather than art for art's sake.

First of all then, a landscape or environment has to be functional. It has to tell the viewer something about the world. So is this a bustling city or a desolate cliff top, or something in between? What is the terrain like? What is the weather like? What kind of people or creatures live here? If you're trying to bring to life a world that is currently only in the client's head, then you need to ask all these

questions and more. In those cases, Gergely Gizella ([www.logartis.info](http://www.logartis.info)) says "the biggest challenge is obviously to visualise a world by description only, as [it] was imagined by someone else. Technically speaking, setting up the basic scene and finding the best lighting setup is the most challenging for me; the detailing is usually the fun part of the process."

It is also absolutely crucial that the image works for the intended audience. That might be the cinema-going public, or it might refer to the modeller or animator who is next on the project. Or – as Gizella recently discovered – it might be children. "Currently I am working on backgrounds for a game aimed at small children and in this case there is no place for anything abstract, like visible brush strokes and such, because they can't understand it. Everything has to be easily interpretable, sometimes at the expense of atmosphere." It needs to be good art too though, because, as Lane Brown notes: "You can't really convey any information until you have the viewer's attention."



## Town and country

### The biggest divide for fantasy environments

As these pages show, there is an enormous amount of variety when it comes to fantasy environments, but the biggest divide is perhaps between town and country imagery. Artists tend to prefer working in one or the other. Jonas De Ro has created a lot of urban work, where he says the biggest challenge is perspective. "Though I know how to apply the basic rules, there are a lot of situations where things get more complex... Buildings that are off-perspective hit the eye right away. However, using a basic vanishing point technique doesn't do it for me. A lot of cities are built organically and not on a grid-like system, meaning that different buildings are built on different planes, each having their own angle and thus

many different vanishing points." De Ro says that cityscapes do have one thing going for them, however: neon. "I really love doing night neon scenes," he says. "Mainly because it allows you to be quite free and abstract with building shapes. Additionally the high contrast of all the lights and signs always creates a nice effect against the dark background."

The natural world offers an enormous amount of variety; forests, lakes, deserts, tundra, the coast and more. But this variety can be forgiving. De Ro says "Whenever I do a landscape piece that involves a natural environment, I feel such a relief when working with organic shapes where these perspective rules don't apply so strictly."

Second, the landscape has to be plausible. That doesn't mean realistic, just believable within the bounds of the world you're working with. In *Harry Potter* it's fine for a dragon to carry a teenager in jeans. In another world it might not be. Jonas De Ro – who works on commissioned concept art as well as personal illustrations of landscapes – explains that he has recently been working on a piece where he "placed elements of countryside USA next to those of modern Russian cities. Not something you'd expect to see usually, but if you do it well it can be pulled off and the effect in this case could be described as a sort of contemporary fantasy. It's a bit like the feeling you get in some cities that were colonised, where you have traditional buildings next to colonial ones. This also creates an interesting backdrop for the world you're creating and not only makes the viewer but also the creator think more about what could have happened in this world and what its history could be." This plausibility seeks to ground what might be considered fantastical (a villain's lair, a towering castle,

#### IROSHI

Inspired by Tokyo and created in the wake of the tsunami and earthquake that hit Japan, Jonas De Ro created this futuristic cityscape



#### LAGOON

"Defining a strong focal point and then moulding the composition to support and enhance it" is the primary challenge of landscape art, according to Lane Brown





### Set the tone

If you go down to the woods today, you'd better go in disguise. But which one?

The enchanted wood is one of fantasy's staple locations, but its tone and feel can vary enormously. Woodland can be cute and appealing – a place of bunnies and picnics – or it can be filled with beasts and have a prison-like vibe, where light can't get in and fair maidens can't get out. So when you're drawing those trees and rocks and sky, think hard about the shapes and colours you choose.

"I love playful organic environments, if it's not obvious from my work" says Jeremy Vickery. "I definitely don't prefer realism, but rather stylised cinematic worlds" as shown in his concept work here. Gergely Gizella likes to bring out the attributes of the wood, but comparing them to the world beyond, saying that he prefers to create "landscapes that include both natural and architectural elements at the same time."

Forests feature heavily in Lane Brown's work, usually "with lots of exaggerated rock formations and a stream of water to tie it all together. I am a fan of organic landscapes, as opposed to scenes with heavy amounts of architecture and geometric material. Organic subject matter allows me to push and pull elements to best suit the overall composition. Trees and rocks can be bent to serve just about any purpose."

#### COTTAGE

Cottage is concept design for a short film of Jeremy Vickery's, featuring his distinctive playful style.



Cottage was created by Jeremy Vickery in 2009 using Painter

#### FOREST TREK

Lane Brown often incorporates "figures or creatures as the focus of the image, though they are often represented in small detail. The landscape serves as a stage for the story, and may in itself be a leading character"

Forest Trek was created by Lane Brown in 2012 using Photoshop



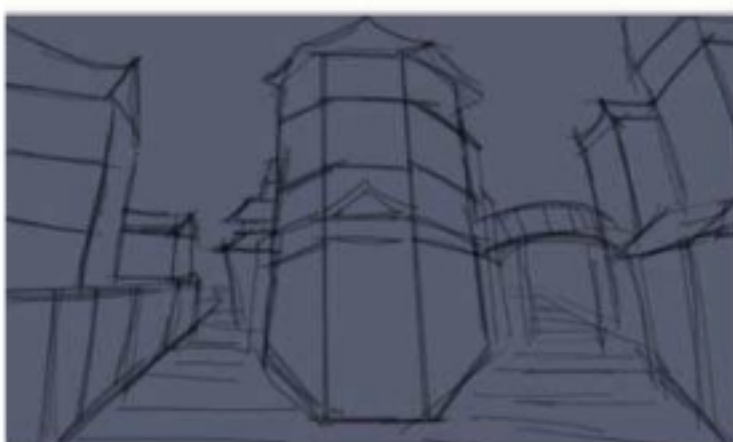
#### FOREST

The perspective – from inside the forest, looking out – gives the impression of freedom, escape from the depth to civilisation in the far distance



## Bring your world to life

An environment for an iPad game set in the Far East in the 17th Century



**01 Sketch it out** First Gizella creates "a very rough line sketch in order to have a basic idea of the space and perspective." The feel of the piece – claustrophobic, intense – is immediately clear from the angle and lack of sky.



**02 Atmospheric pressure** Experiment with the right colours to achieve the right atmosphere. Gizella fills them in "with a simple brush to see how they work together, focusing only on the large surfaces like the sky and walls."



**03 Light and shine** "Once I find the right colours, I start thinking more about the lighting and smaller elements. In this picture the main light source is the sun and its reflections will be important, so I block them in too."



## UNDERGROUND CITY

Marta Nael painted Underground City for Luke Keith in 2010, using Photoshop



### PANDEMONIUM

Ramsés Meléndez designed this image of Pandemonium city in 2012 in Photoshop, concentrating on the red and yellows to create what he calls "an impressive hell castle"



### AQUEOS

Lane Brown created Aqueos in Photoshop in 2010. Lane doesn't like to bog himself down with research, saying: "I save my research and reference-finding for when I hit the boundaries of my imagination"

gleaming spaceships) and fully engage the audience with the scene.

Third, a fantasy landscape must be evocative. It must have a temperature, a mood. The story it's telling must evoke some sort of response from the viewer. And to do this it has to be appealing. It doesn't have to be cute, and it may depict evil or even be out-and-out ugly – but it can still be breathtaking, and it can still involve the audience.

"Dark mood and creepy ambience" are the favourite types of landscape of Ramsés Meléndez ([ramsesmelendez.blogspot.co.uk](http://ramsesmelendez.blogspot.co.uk)), while matte painter and illustrator Marta Nael ([martanael.daportfolio.com](http://martanael.daportfolio.com)) loves "foggy landscapes with sci-fi cities... sunsets, huge storms or anything involving saturated colours." She isn't a fan of fantasy clichés, or landscapes "that show what has already been done everywhere by everyone. That's why, if I'm commissioned to do those kind of cliché things I tend to change colours in order to add some more interest."

Colour is of vital importance in establishing mood. Jeremy Vickery explains: "As a lighting artist my passion is light and colour, so I

always love trying to create mood with light. I try to use the colour and light as a key element of the composition. And as much as I love landscapes, I also love to try interesting interiors as well... as long as it evokes in the mind of the viewer a world or location they'd want to visit and explore. Basically I try to make places that I would want to go to."

Lane Brown, who is often surprised by the amount of freedom allowed in his commissioned work, explains that what the scene evokes is often the most important factor: "It is generally less a matter of the landscape's content, and more a matter of the mood which it conveys. For much of my work the only requirements are that a scene inspires a larger world, and that it expresses the theme and emotion of the overarching story. So much about environment art is really very arbitrary as far as details are concerned. That's the aspect I enjoy most."

Making a landscape feel truly immersive is the ultimate goal. It's such a big canvas that making sure every element is in harmony is often what differentiates the great from the good. Early landscape art, that didn't make any

claim to photorealism, often stumbled here. How could the artist realistically connect a foreground scene (a house, say) with a distant panoramic vista? Mountains and waterfalls were often lobbed in to disguise the change in perspective, or in the case of the Chinese paintings, large amounts of swirling mist were often used.

"I love to create new kind of landscapes," says Ramsés Meléndez, "and I feel happy with this, because I think it would be great to live in these worlds." And that really is the key to a successful landscape. The artist needs to believe that this is a world, not a single shot, and if they do, then hopefully they can convince the viewer of the same thing. If the scene in question is designed for a game then those details need to have a purpose. The artist needs to consider the player's experience of going through the world, using paths and leading them through or confusing them as you desire.

The key to convincing is in the details. "Those details just need to texture the image with a high-resolution look," explains De Ro. "The main idea should be there pretty much



**04 From draft to detail** With the building blocks in place, the real work comes in. "I started refining the buildings, starting from large surfaces and then worked myself into the smaller ones. I also added some new elements and details."



**05 Let there be (more) light** Gizella found the composition unbalanced, so added street lamps to the left to compensate for the light coming from the sun. He added "textures to the flat surfaces, mostly using custom brushes."

Gergely created Downtown in 2012, using Photoshop. His final step was to adjust the colour balance and the Hue/Saturation to achieve a warmer look





+

### The classic fantasy castle

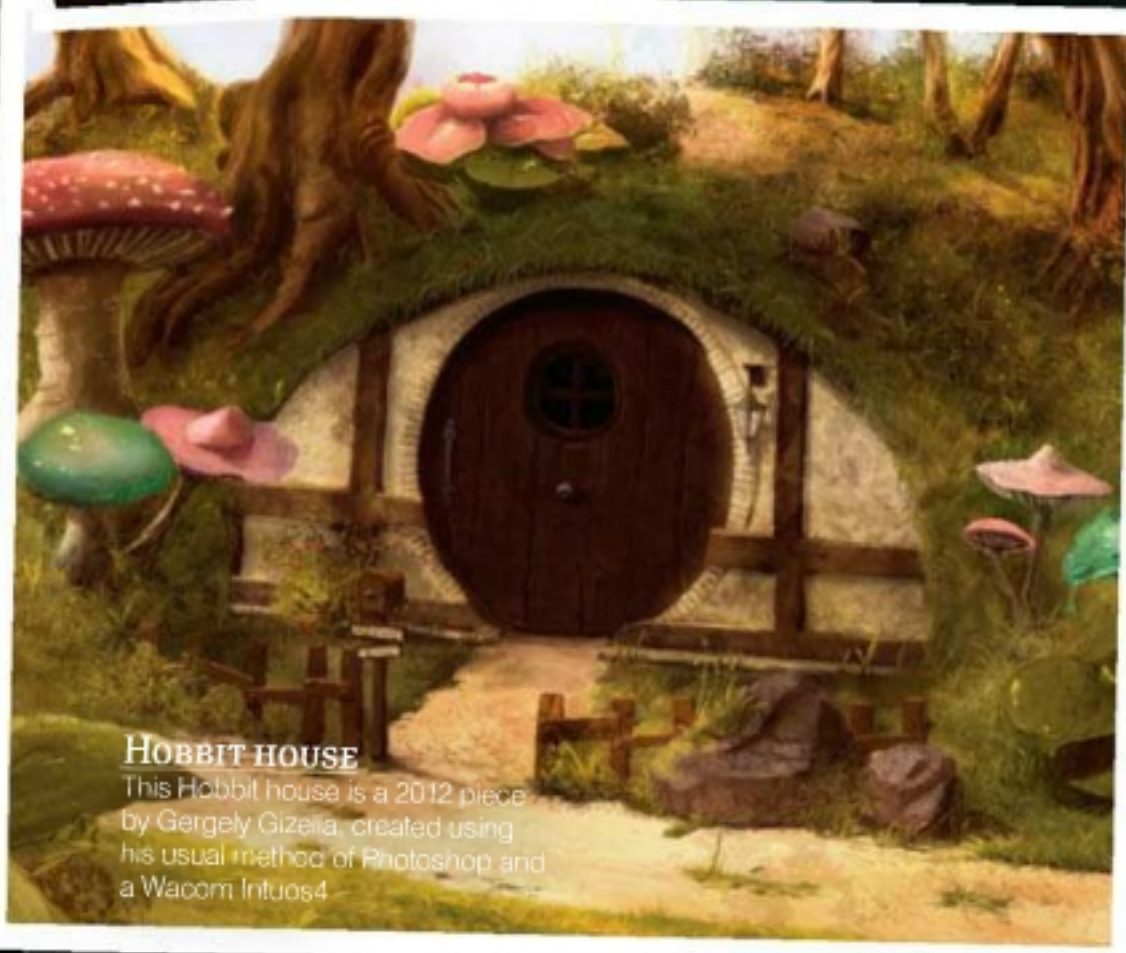
Stonehold is a personal piece by Jonas De Ro, created this year. "The basic setup was to have a horse rider against an elevated castle carved out of a rock," he explains. Emerging from the rock softens the castle, and it unifies the piece.

### The mist

As there was in ancient Chinese landscapes, there is lots of mist here, passing through the rock formations. "Mist always helps to add depth to the scene because of the colour perspective it creates," says De Ro. "Things in the distance become vague and less defined giving a more mystical feel."

### MARSHLAND CONDOS

Marshland Condos is a 2012 piece that Lane Brown painted in Photoshop. Lane works hard to study the Old Masters of landscape painting, noting that painters such as "George Inness, Isaac Levitan, and Ivan Shishkin have left behind a true bounty of knowledge that we can gain through the study of their work"



### HOBBIT HOUSE

This Hobbit house is a 2012 piece by Gergely Gizeia, created using his usual method of Photoshop and a Wacom Intuos4

### Human behaviour

In an earlier version of the image, the rider was bigger, but De Ro tweaked it, making him look suitably dwarfed by his environment. The other finishing touch is the birds. Their movement just off the centre gives this still scene some extra life.



### Ray of light

Sky is always crucial in landscapes, and seeing a lot of it helps to give a sense of the epic, as here. To help create that "sense of wonder" De Ro has also added strong light rays. But it's not a bright, clear blue sky; everything here is more complicated than that, hence the mist.

### White light

The limited range of colours is one of the things that makes this piece such a success. Blacky greys and browns, dark green, bright blue and lots and lots of white all make it look as if there is a lot of light in the scene, but also keep it natural and muted.

### Down to the water

"To make the environment impressive, one needs to put a lot of things together," says De Ro. Here, everything is framed around the water. "This is typical for fantasy, where we put all the elements that we like into a single frame to create an epic setting. Something that is more rare in the real world."



from the beginning, and a thumbnail comparison with the final work should not be too different. However I do find myself playing with these details to add interesting information to the main scene. People like to look at little details that might help them imagine or figure out the story behind the picture, or to look at a picture several times and discover things they had not noticed before."

But Vickery adds, "a lot can be conveyed with simple shapes and strong lighting, which makes the world immersive and evocative. I try not to get too caught up in details that would make me lose sight of the big picture. Form and light must work together until you can't tell which is which and the world just 'is' and invites people to jump in."

It might sound like a lot, to ask a landscape to be functional, plausible, evocative and immersive, but that's the standard of work that's out there. Because of the detail that games and digital mattes have, even those just creating illustration have to raise their game. And as well as making people want to step into your world, you might even try making them think about this one. As Marta Nael adds: "I always try to create landscapes that allow people to travel to fantasy worlds or else make people think about what we are doing with our world. Wars, pollution and crisis are things that can also be recreated in a sci-fi painting and help people think about it. They actually are not frozen landscapes, they're worlds with a future, a past and a present from which we can only see a single snapshot."







# Manga masterclass

**Schin Loong** demonstrates how to paint a colourful manga character within a dark nighttime setting

The Ghost Slayer

*Photoshop, Painter*

When people think of manga, the first things they usually think of are cute, cheerful chibis and brightly coloured magical girls. It's not often that we remember the darker side to manga; the one filled with ghosts and witches and occult horror. East Asian myths and legends form an imaginative variety of ghostly tales ranging from cute wisps which help lost travellers to horrifying giant skeletons and seductive snake women who lure victims to their doom. These gruesome tales may be too scary were it not for the ghost-hunting heroine who comes to exorcise the spirits away using her magical sword, powerful paper seals and, of course, sexy ghost-repelling outfit. For this painting, we are choosing to be inspired by traditional Taoist priests who actually do folk exorcising; these Chinese sorcerers perform magic to repel not only ghosts but also bad luck, enemies, romantic rivals or even people who are just plain disliked. However, to be true to the spirit of manga, the robes are heavily modified to be much sexier and cuter – reminiscent of a magical girl!

The ghosts in this painting are very simple spirits with basic manga expressions. They may look evil but really they're just cute and harmless, which gives our ghost hunter a much more commanding and superior position. Plus, a sword just looks really cool to wield!

Of course, ghosts only come out at night so that is when our exorcism is taking place. However, just because it is nighttime that doesn't mean it has to be dull and dark. For this painting, we are going to paint a lively and bright scene lit by moonlight reflecting off a river. It is dark enough to be vague yet the colours are still bright enough to be attractive. We will explore different effects, colour options and textures to create this scene. Let's get started.



**SCHIN LOONG**

Artist info



[schin-art.com](http://schin-art.com)

There are two things I am deathly afraid of: caterpillars and ghosts. At least caterpillars turn into pretty butterflies eventually, but I will never, ever sit through a scary ghost movie.



### Who you gonna call?

A little bit of spooky humour is needed

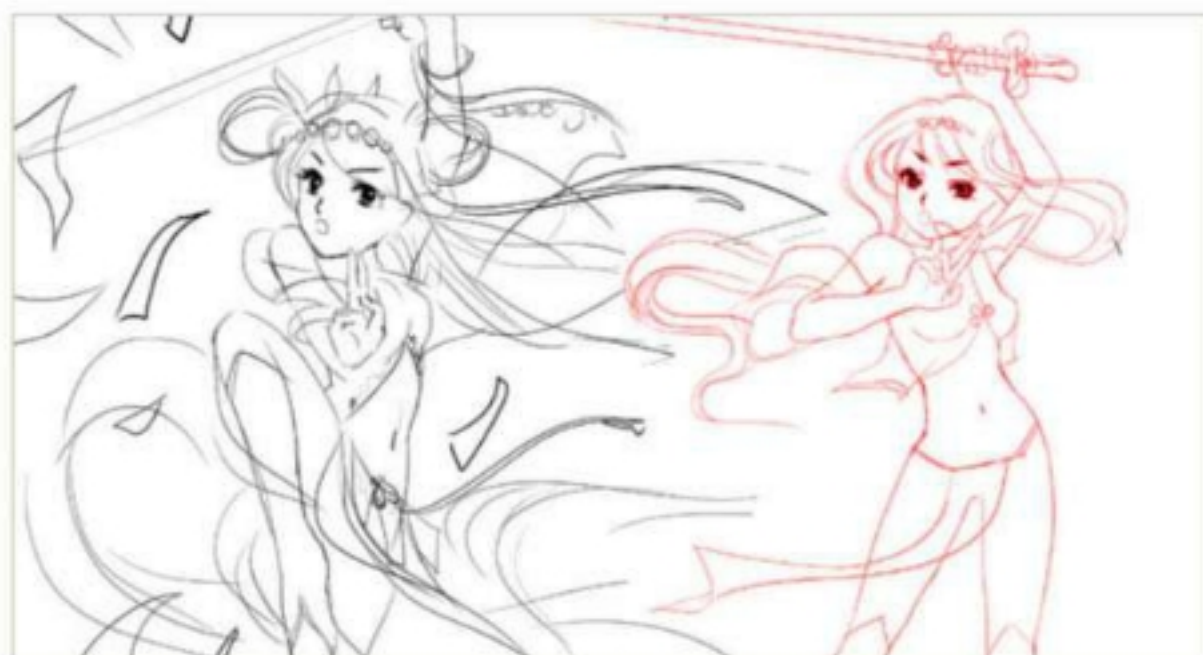


#### 01 Plan out a lively pose

To start with, let's make three sketches to play around with. Go wild with your imagination and just go bonkers with the poses. At this stage, it really doesn't matter if they don't make too much sense – just plan out a pose quickly and then move on to the next one. Don't spend too much time on them!



**02 Raise your arms** This is the quick sketch of the preliminary idea. She has both arms raised, one holding a sword and the other holding a spirit seal paper with her fingers. As this painting will be horizontal, extend her hair to the right to fill the space and determine the flow of the composition. Quick, curvy lines are the ticket!



**03 Further revisions** Here is some feedback on how the faces should look. We also decided that her legs should be firmly planted on the ground yet keeping the body pose. It is very important to always look things up for clarification!



#### 04 The first sketch

Using the first sketch as a guideline, make a tighter sketch, this time focusing on the pose and the body. Add clothes and hair later; the most important thing for now is to have the expressions and body pose correct. Use Photoshop to change sizes accordingly and don't be afraid to keep redoing whatever doesn't feel right.

### COLOUR CONTRAST

Study your colour wheel. The complementary colour to blue is yellow/orange, so if you place these together then it will really pop out. You should also keep in mind cultural colours: red, for example, is a more traditional Chinese colour than orange, so that is how we chose the hunter's robe colours. All these little planned out details do add up in the long run.



**05 We have a hunter!** Here, the pose is mostly simplified with the clothes and hair and details added on. Keep the lines simple, clean and neat – you will be needing them soon. Don't worry too much about the background at the moment; the focus of the painting is on the hunter so that's where you should be focusing as well!



**06 Add movement** On a separate layer, add the ghosts and flying papers. These do not have to be set in stone, but a guideline on how things should flow will help you with the composition and character of the ghosts. Here, you can see some of the ghosts attacking and being attacked by the threatening spirit seals.





**07 Background colour** For the background, you can add a gradient or just throw your painting colour down. As this is a nighttime setting, use a dark blue as the base and play with purples and greys for variety, and yellow spots for the ghosts. Vary your colours for interest.



**09 Give me a face** Starting with the face will allow you to nail down your ghost hunter's character early on. To contrast with all the blue, give her a warm skin tone that ranges from a greyish blue for the shadows to warm yellow brights for highlights.



**12 Contrast the character** Extend the red all the way to her skirt – now she really stands out! Don't forget to always keep her immersed in her surroundings. To achieve that, always remember to blend a little of the surrounding colour into her skin, her clothes and her hair. For example, suggest that her cape is a dark red but keep the shadows bluish to blend into the scene.



**08 Add the scene** Add some nighttime clouds and a hint of mountain range at the back of the scene, and play with more light and dark colours. Clouds should be dark in front with a thin, white line over them to suggest lightning from behind. More blues and purples are added to create depth.



**10 Black hair** Since our hunter is presumably Asian, give her black hair, which incidentally should reflect the surrounding colour; in this case, a light blue. This contrast of colour is very dramatic and makes her look really exciting. Don't paint one strand at a time either – remember, hair is clumpy so paint it in clumps and then finish it off with a few highlighting strands.



**13 Appropriate costumes for ghost hunting** Our hunter is almost complete. Add the finishing details on her clothes by referencing traditional Asian robe designs. These are very intricate, and a lot of care and time should be put into them, but don't put so much detail in that it might overwhelm the overall painting. A little moderation and some suggestion of detail is all it needs.



**14 Build a narrative** At this point, we should think about why she is fighting ghosts – they don't just come out of nowhere. Set a scene to tell a story to the viewer. In this case, we've gone for a haunted Japanese moon-viewing lantern where the mini ghosts are living. The ghosts are also rearranged for a better compositional flow. Everything is changeable, so don't be afraid of change!

## Zoom Zoom!

Always zoom in and out of the painting or use the Navigator window tool in Photoshop to keep track of the composition. It's easy to focus too much on tiny parts of a painting, or else paint in such broad strokes that detail is lost. Always zoom in when painting detail like faces and clothes, but zoom out again to make sure that it enhances the overall look instead of overpowering it.



**11 Build up the costume** We give her a red and black-themed costume, which is appropriate for an Asian ghost hunter. To update her wardrobe, try cute ribbons with bells on her hair, black fur-trimmed robes and a bright blue jewelled tiara. The spirit seal is traditionally yellow.



- 15 Add depth** Behind the lantern, add a bridge to suggest an eerie river (often a metaphor for the border between ghosts and the living). A thin, black horizon at the back also suggests a dark forest, which adds to the spooky feel. Every little detail helps add to the overall atmosphere.



- 16 The ghosts are alive!** Using the Dodge and Glow tools, bring your spirits to life! Now the scene is more exciting with scary, wispy ghosts all over the place. The glows also serve as points of interests for the painting and make it fun.

- 17 It's not exorcism without magic** Now we need to add some mysterious magic glows. Use Photoshop layer effects to suggest some supernatural glows around the character. Add some mysterious fire around her sword to suggest that it is magical.



- 18 Glow effects in the background** Use the Dodge tool to bring out the highlights of her thighs, eyes, face and hair. Don't go overboard though; the Dodge tool should only be used in moderation, but it is particularly useful for colourful manga art that is always in need of bright, unmuddled colours.

- 19 More movement and textures** There needs to be more movement so add some glowy points to the painting... are they magical powers floating around her? Or just radioactive flower petals? Whatever they are, they add more drama and make the nighttime more exciting. At this point, add some texture to the ground beneath her.



## RESEARCH

It is always worth the extra effort to go out and study your subject before starting a painting. That way, it will end up being grounded in reality. A historical or cultural character like a Taoist priest can be a great background for a completely new manga character and will be rooted in believability. Always take some time to look things up and you will be surprised at how much it will inspire you.



## 20 Little details

I don't write Chinese so I just scribbled a little on the spirit seal papers. It doesn't have to look authentic; as long as there is the suggestion of Asian writing it should be fine. The brain acts in mysterious ways, and prefers to perfect the imperfect and then views the perfect as imperfect!



**21 More expression and colour** It's difficult to see the expressions of the ghosts at this point, so change their line art colour so you can see them better. You can also play around with the background colour to add more interest – notice there is now more purple in the sky. Oh, and we have a moon!



**22 And even more expression** The ghosts still don't look very fun at the moment, so to take care of that we just add a little rosy blush and some manga expressions to their faces. Now they look really cute and fun, and you can almost feel sorry for them!

**23 More detail** Add texture to the stone bridge to make it look more menacing and scary. You can also make the lantern more glowy, but not so much that it distracts from everything else. It is important to remember the hierarchy of important elements so that one doesn't overpower the others.



**24 Final touches** At this stage, the background seems too light, which means that the hunter does not seem to be standing out enough. So with a large brush, gently darken some of the background clouds, especially the parts behind the character. Now she's standing out on her own!



### **25 The final exorcism**

Zoom into the painting really closely and take another good look. Sometimes you might miss a stray line here or a colour there, or notice something that needs more detail. A painting is never really done until you force yourself to stop. So stop!





JOHN  
MALCOLM

Artist info



[johnmalcolm1970.co.uk](http://johnmalcolm1970.co.uk)

Although now working full-time for a local newspaper group, John has found his free time increasingly being taken up with digital art. He is happiest painting things from scratch using Painter 12 but also likes to play with Blender.

# Steampunk technology

**John Malcolm** explains how to invent plausible looking scenes based on steampunk technology

The Mechanical Achilles

*Painter*

Steampunk is a wonderful genre for imagining alternate histories and what-if scenarios. What if Charles Babbage had further developed his Difference Engine – the first mechanical computer – or actually built his even more complex Analytical Engine? Combining real events with technology that could feasibly have been used in the 19th Century helps us to invent steampunk machines to populate an alternate Victorian era.

Creating a steampunk robot can be more interesting than simply making a brass figure with a couple of gears slapped on. It can be fun to try and figure out how it would be held together, how it would move, how it would burn fuel and create steam and how it would be controlled. Not everything has to be on show, of course, but thinking about these questions can help you to come up with a more plausible looking design. There's no harm in taking things a bit (or even much) further

than was historically possible, either. Babbage's Difference Engine was room-sized. It's easy to imagine that technology shrinking down in size as further advances were made, leading to the shoulder-mounted 'brain' of our Mechanical Achilles here.

It helps to look at real Victorian inventions and technology, in order to see what they were made of and how they were put together. Paintings and photographs are also useful, not just for design elements but also for things like mood and colour. Industries such as shipbuilding are a useful place to look for robotic inspiration, as that was the era of the first ironclads – plenty of rivets and steam.

It's also nice to leave some unanswered questions in an image because this involves the viewer in the storyline: Why are the robot's eyes glowing? Why are the foundry workers so alarmed? Why are the gentlemen in the foreground unfazed?





Develop a steamed-up scene with the line art.

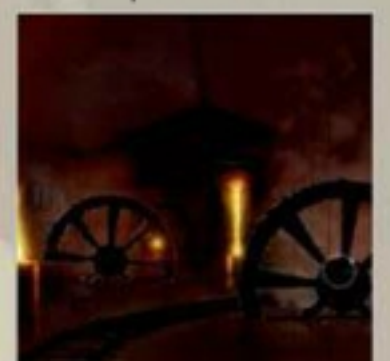
## WORKING PROGRESS



Step 04, Sketch things in



Step 10, Robot time!



Step 15, Put the steam in steampunk



## Develop steampunk technology

Design a cog-laden, gear-whirring, steam-belching battle robot



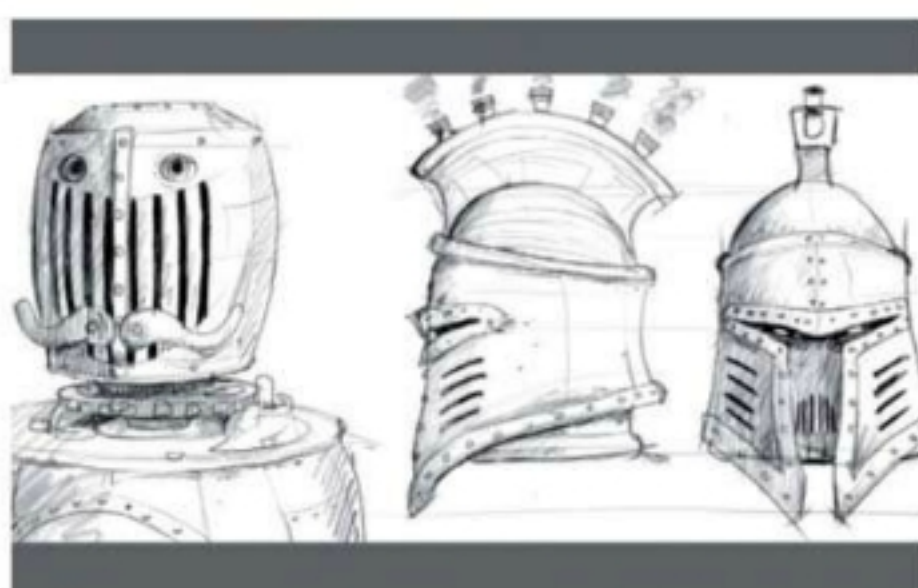
### 01 Find some references

Start by hunting around for reference images. These can be a combination of photographs that contain the type of material that you plan to use and other images like paintings, or indeed anything else that inspires you. To make things easier, cut and paste all of these into a reference document.

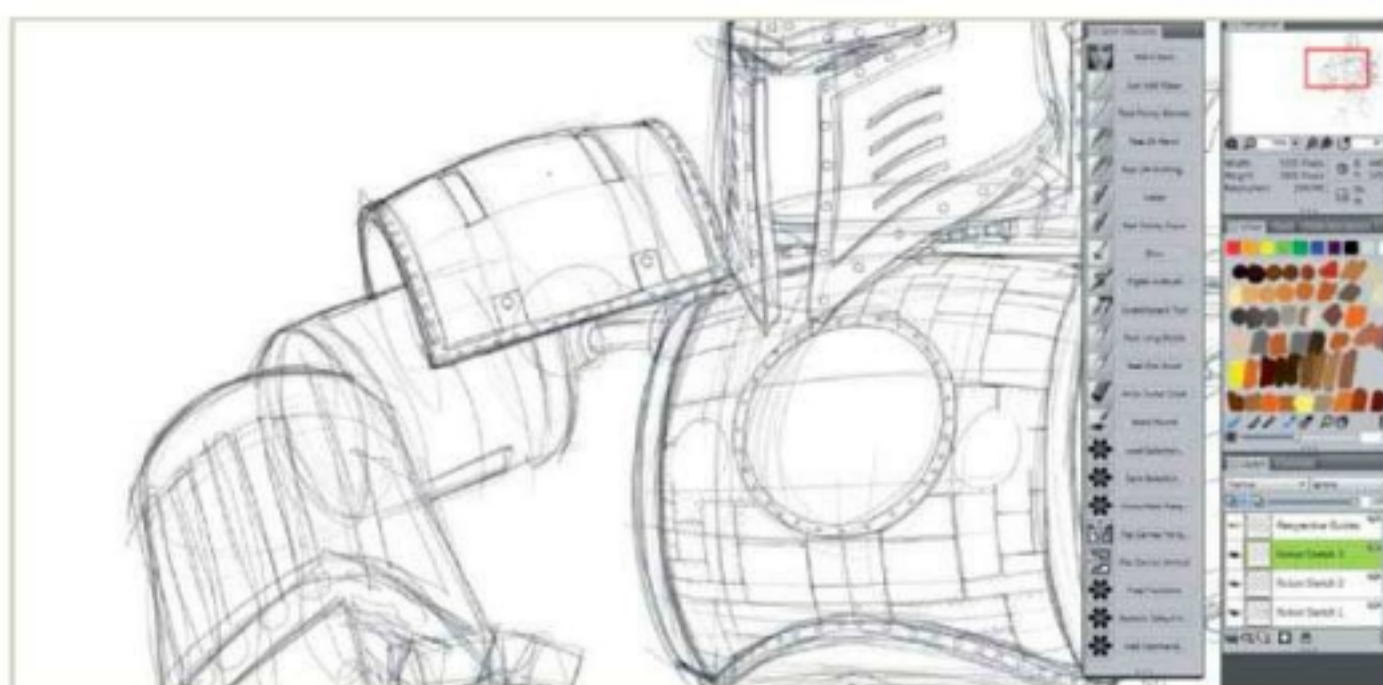


### 02

**Build a palette** Create a Mixer Palette in Painter to get started. Open your reference moodboard in Painter and then clear your Mixer Palette (remember to save the existing one somewhere safe). Hold down Alt and right-click to sample colours from the image, then paint a tiny blob in the Mixer Palette.



**03 Initial ideas** The head of a robot says a lot about its 'personality'. The first one here looks too friendly – more like a robot butler. This is a war machine, so the design of the head is developed to look like a hoplite soldier's helmet. This ties in with the robot's name – the Greek hero Achilles was famed for his armour, supposedly engineered by the gods.

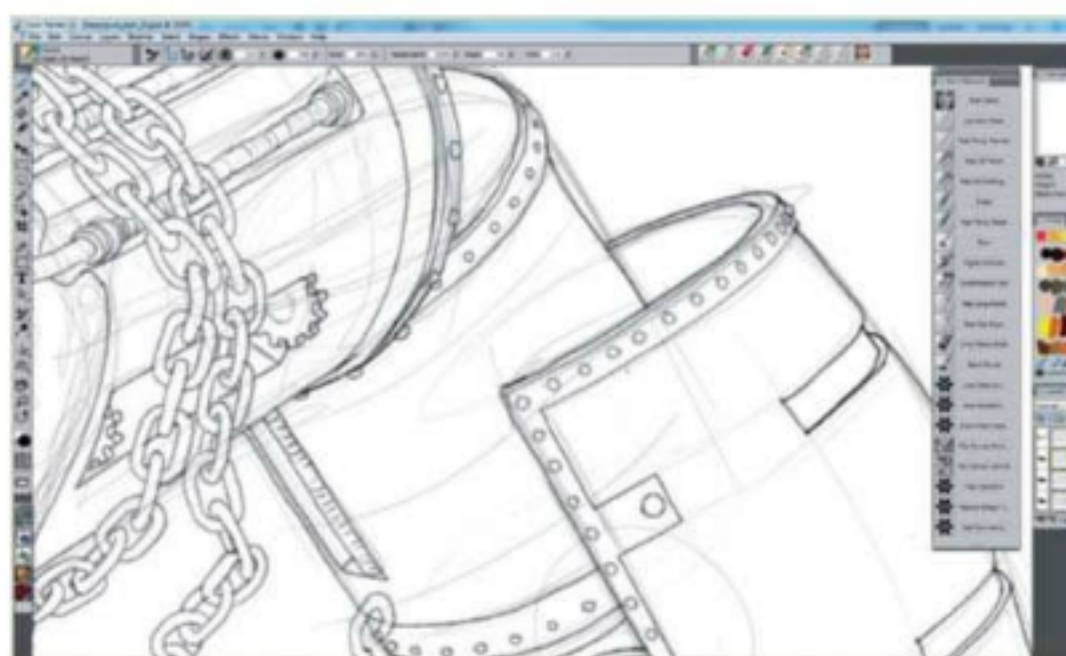


### 04

**Sketch things in** Create a new layer. Begin your sketch using the Pencils>Real 2B Pencil variant, being sure to consider the robot's function. A war robot such as this needs armour to protect its vulnerable shoulder joints and cogs. Once things are roughed in, reduce the opacity of the sketch layer and then create another layer above it to refine the drawing.

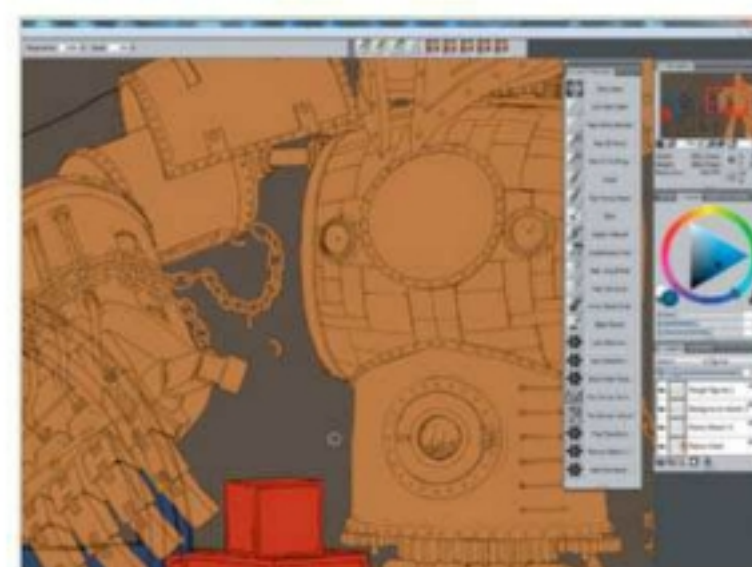
## RESIZE BRUSHES

There are many ways of resizing your brush in Painter, and I recently discovered another one by accident (my fingers thought they were heading for the Spacebar to pan...). If your keyboard has an Alt Gr key, just to the right of the Spacebar, then simply hitting it will call up dynamic brush sizing for you to use.



### 05

**More drawing** Continue the process of drawing, reducing layer opacity and then working on a new layer above. This allows you to slowly refine the image while retaining your initial strokes. As you draw, imagine how the robot is held together and how it moves. Once the robot is done, you can repeat the process with a background or other characters.



### 06

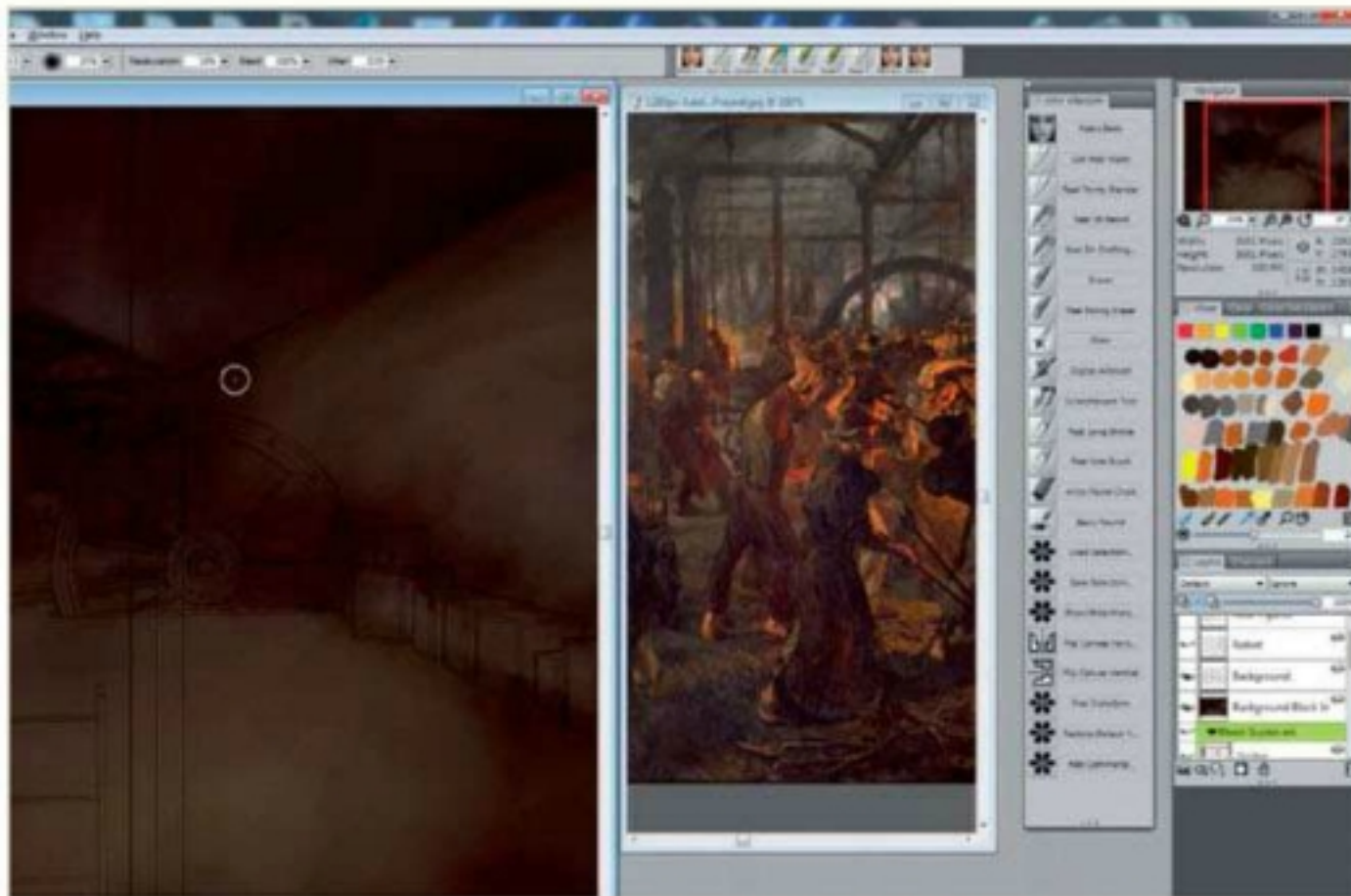
**Create mask layers** It can be useful to be able to call up selections while you work. Fill your canvas with a warmish grey using the Paint Bucket tool. Create a new layer under your drawing layers. Name the layer Robot Mask and, with a bright colour, fill in the entire area of the robot. Repeat for any other parts for which you'd like to save selections.





## 07 Save selections

Right-click on the layer thumbnail for the Robot Mask layer to make a selection of its contents. Then choose **Select > Save Selection**. Fill in the name field in the Save Selection pop-up and press **OK**. Repeat this for every mask layer you created, and you will have a library of selections to choose from.



**08 Mix mud** All of the mask layers can now be safely deleted. Create a new layer for your background colour and begin laying down darker areas of warm grey and brown. Things can look a bit drab and muddy at this stage. If you plan to include bright, hot molten metal and fire then a dark background will enhance them.



**09 Refine the background** The workflow for the background is very much like the sketching stages; adding layer after layer and refining what's underneath. Being able to load selections for things like the giant wheels can help a lot. To load one of the selections created earlier, go to **Select > Load Selection**. Add them to a custom palette if it helps.

## METALLIC REFLECTIONS

A good way of keeping metallic objects consistent throughout your scene is to first create a couple of references for yourself. Create a new layer, keeping it separate from the others, and then paint a small sphere, a cube and perhaps a cylinder too. Highlights, suggested reflections and colours can then be painted onto these simple building block shapes, depending on the lighting requirements of your scene. Now you have a reference layer to refer to and colour pick from.

## Style School

Art genres in a nutshell

## Steampunk inspiration

### Classic images that informed this composition

These three images stand out among the many I selected as references when thinking about, designing, drawing and finally painting my steampunk robot. The Victorian age was an age of great technological advancement, and the two paintings involving metalworking illustrate this change completely. They are contrasting views of the same basic activity, yet still have much in common; the darkness of the work area and the brightness of molten metal. The Shield of Achilles is included because Achilles was renowned as the greatest warrior of classical myth, and what better device for a battle robot to bear on his chest.



Artist: **Angelo Monticelli**  
Title: **Shield of Achilles**  
Date: **c. 1820**  
Location/Owner: **Le Costume Ancien ou Moderne**  
Web: [tinyurl.com/fa-monticelli](http://tinyurl.com/fa-monticelli)

● The Shield of Achilles is based on the description of the shield borne by the hero Achilles and

forged by the god of smithing, Hephaestus. Greek mythology was a very popular subject in Victorian Britain, and so this was an ideal subject for the robot's boilerplate.



Artist: **Adolph Menzel**  
Title: **Eisenwalzwerk (The Iron Rolling Mill)**  
Date: **1872-1875**  
Location/Owner: **Alte Nationalgalerie**  
Web: [tinyurl.com/fa-menzel](http://tinyurl.com/fa-menzel)

● I love this painting, which was used as a reference in the robot image. The strongest light source is the hot metal being worked in the foreground. The various temperatures of light in the scene, both warm and cool, and the dark wheel against the light steam were particularly inspirational.



Artist: **Joseph Wright of Derby**  
Title: **A Blacksmith's Shop**  
Date: **1771**  
Location/Owner: **Derby Museum and Art Gallery**  
Web: [tinyurl.com/fa-wod1](http://tinyurl.com/fa-wod1)

● This painting shows how bright and luminous an object can appear when set against, and contrasted with, a much darker background. I also like the way the bright white ingot casts strong shadows that radiate out from a single source, causing those shadows to be distorted on the walls.





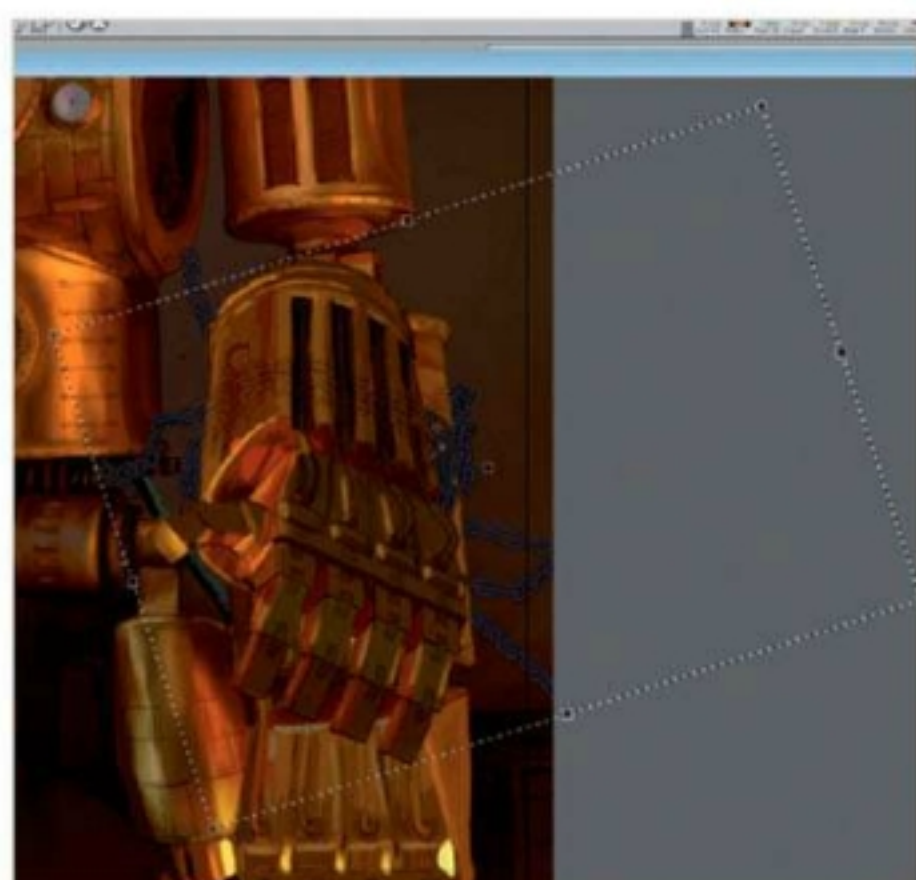
### 10 Robot time!

For the robot colour layers use a brush like Rob's Basic ([tiny.cc/robsbrushes](http://tiny.cc/robsbrushes)), which lays down colour while allowing some blending at low pressure. Use Blender>Just Add Water to blend where needed. Try to include a range of brass or copper tones. Bright highlight strokes will help to suggest that something is actually being reflected in the metal.

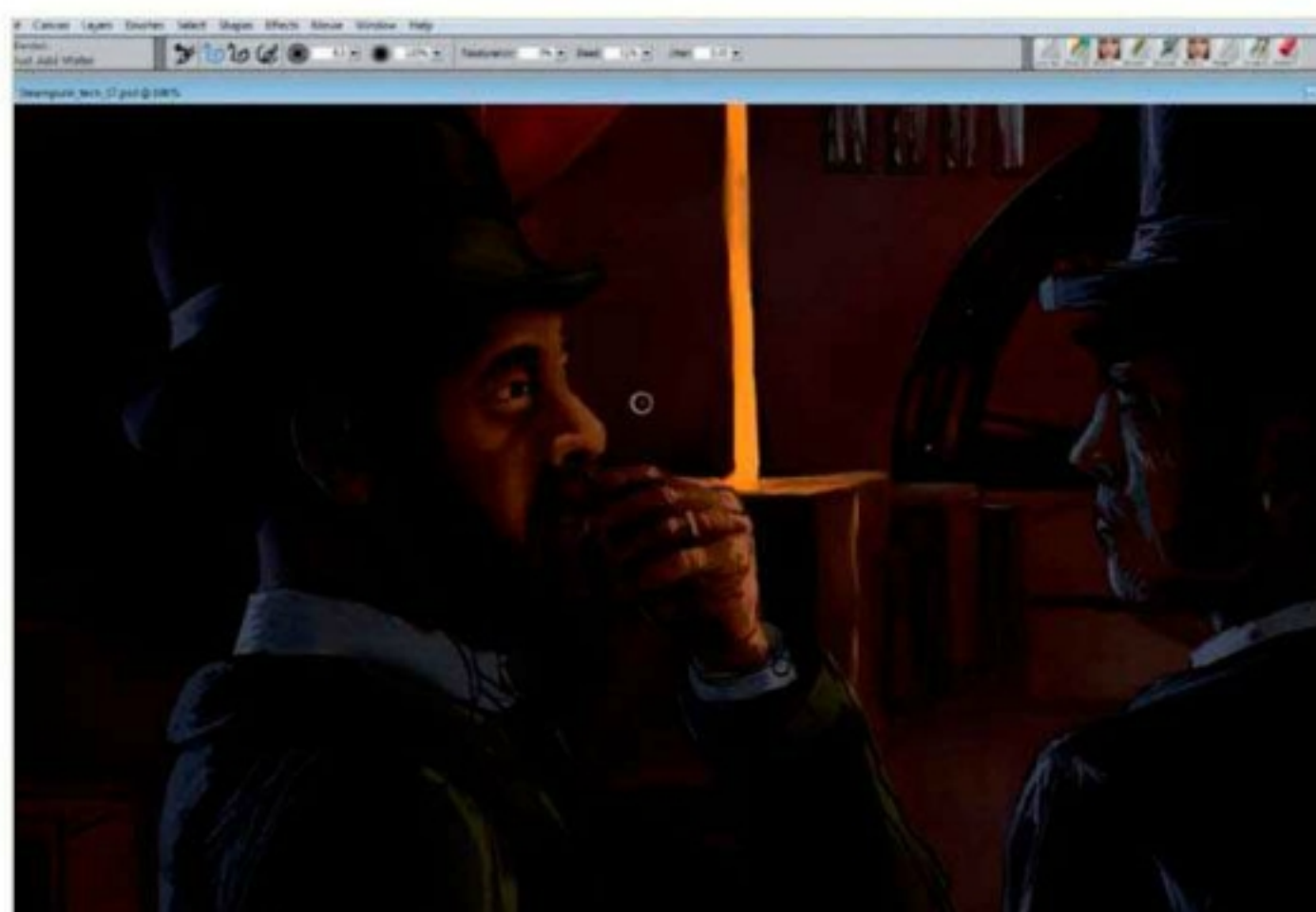


### 11 Multiple light sources

To make metal look realistic, use more than one light source to reflect off its surface. Try using a combination of warm orange and yellow light together with a cooler blue-ish or even green tone. Having an actual object made of metal in front of you can help a lot at this stage.



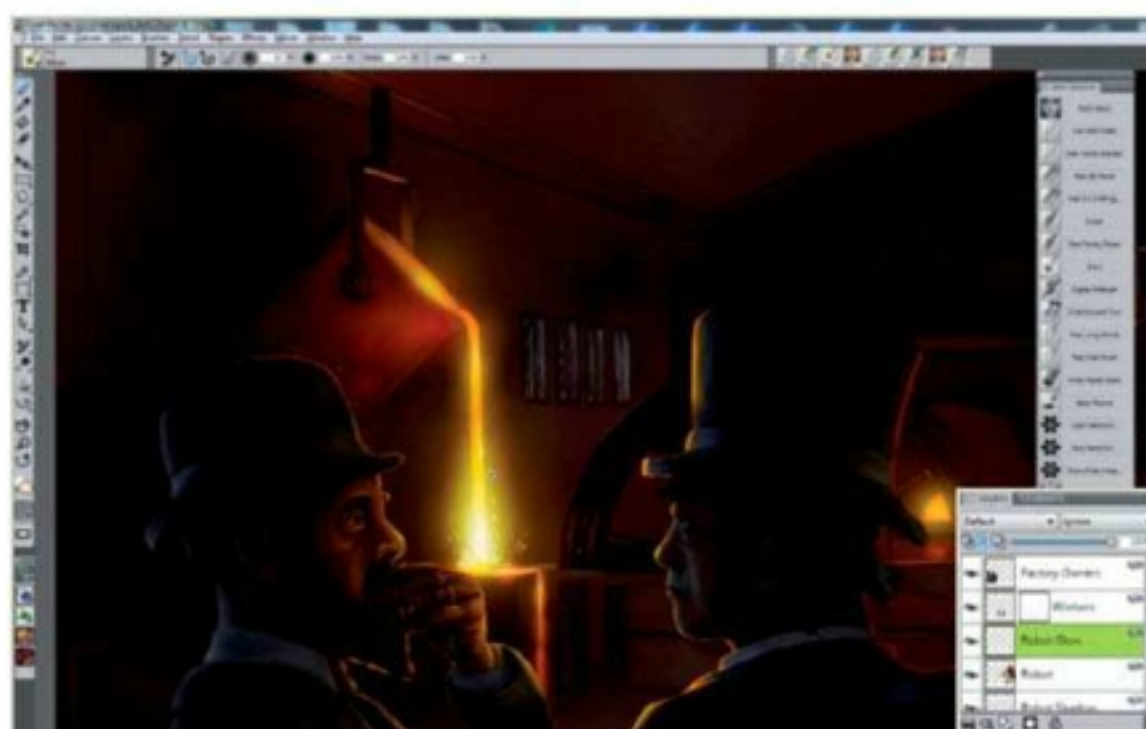
**12 Make corrections** It's never too late to tweak your robot's position. This robot's pose needs to be a bit more dynamic, so replace his boring right arm with a copy of his left arm. A good way to do this is to make a selection and hit Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+C (Copy Merged), then paste and use Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+T) to flip and rotate.



**13 Scheming industrialists** Use the same process as in step 10 to begin building up colour layers for human characters in the scene. These are very useful for giving your robot a sense of scale, as well as adding a bit of narrative. A good source for references is to ask friends or family to pose. Take as many photos as their patience allows.

## CUSTOM PALETTES

Brush variants aren't the only thing that can be added to a custom palette in Painter. If there are menu commands that you use frequently then you can add these too by choosing Window>Custom Palette>Add Command. I like to have such things as Load and Save Selection, Show/Hide Marquee and then some canvas-flipping commands inside my custom palettes.



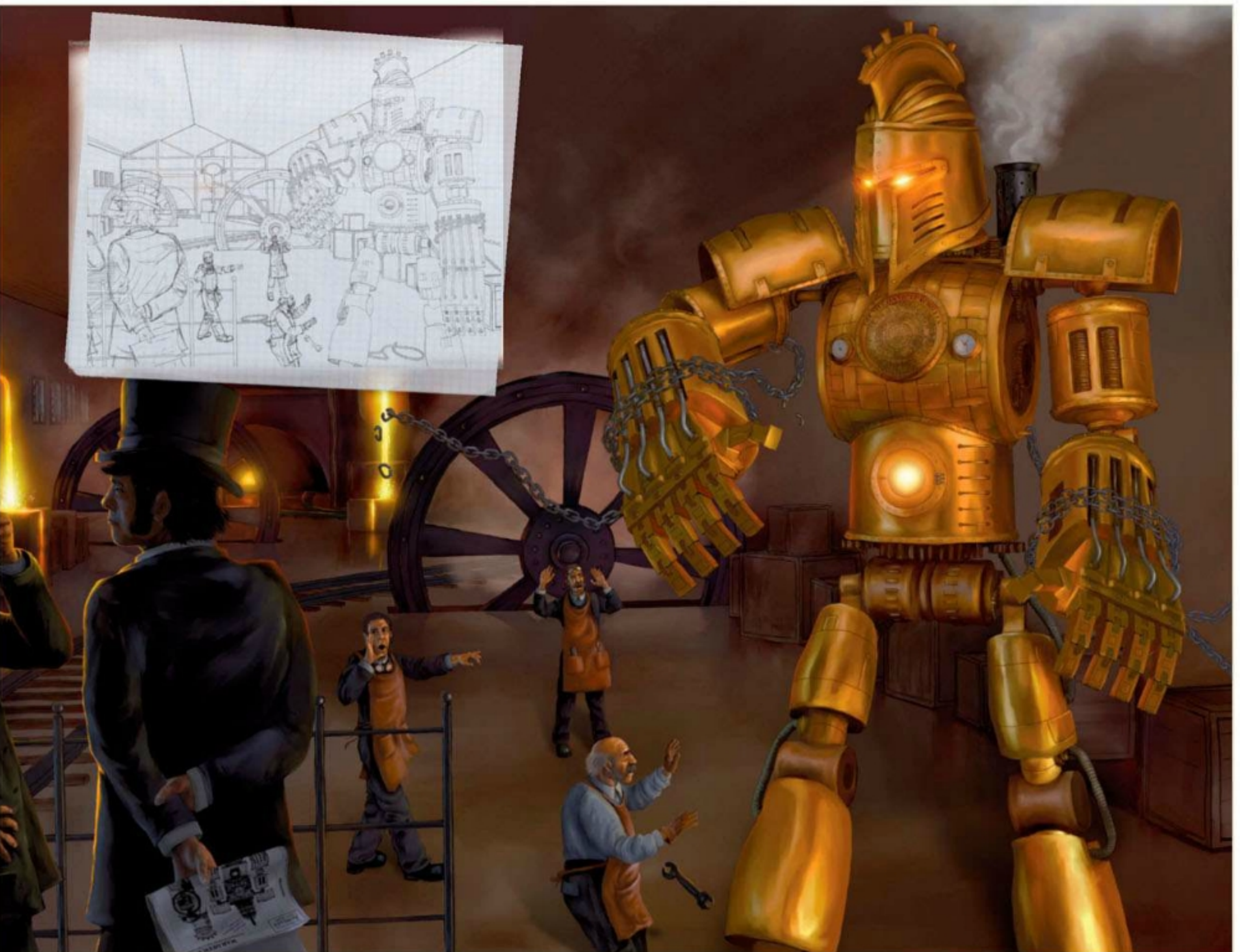
**14 Turn the heat up** Create a new layer above your background. Select the FX>Glow brush. Pick a light, saturated yellow or orange and then slowly go over the areas of the image that have molten metal, fire or, in this case, glowing robot eyes. This is a good way of putting a strong light source into your scene – which can be exploited by adding rim light to the characters.



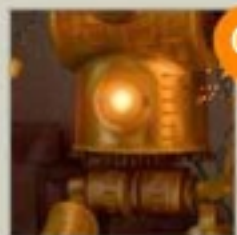
### 15 Put the steam in steampunk

There are two methods for creating steam. The first is to use the Airbrush>Digital Airbrush lightly on its own layer with reduced opacity to build up a cloud of steam. Saved selections can then be called up to remove the steam from objects in front of it. The second method is to use Rob's Basic again lightly in small circular motions to build up denser steam. Once the steam is added, you're done.





## KEY TECHNIQUES



**01 The furnace** When designing a steam-powered battle robot, or any steam driven device for that matter, you have to consider where the fuel goes in and where it's burned to generate the steam. Here, it's placed in the robot's abdomen.



**02 The boiler** The horizontally turned, barrel-shaped boiler that forms the chest makes the robot look more powerful – which is suitable for a robot named Achilles. The boiler has to look substantial enough to withstand the huge pressure within, so make sure it's sturdy.



**03 Gears and cogs** Think about how your robot might move. Huge clunky gears and cogs are almost mandatory for a steampunk automaton. Place groups of them wherever the robot might need rotational movement, such as the neck, waist and where the upper legs join the waist section. Have smaller gears driving the larger ones.



**04 Chimney** Steam generated by the robot has got to come out somewhere. Try a chimney attached to its back. The vents on top of the robot's helmet are designed as an emergency escape for steam.



**05 Dials and gauges** You can't have a steam-powered robot without including at least a couple of dials and gauges. Otherwise, the technicians would have nothing to tap with their fingers during tests and maintenance. These ones are attached to the boiler section, so they obviously have something to do with pressure.



**06 The "brain"** The robot's Difference Engine, inspired by Charles Babbage's design, is mounted on the back of its shoulders. Considering the massive original, it's a marvel of miniaturisation!



# Paint a classic fantasy heroine

**Tony Foti** creates a Frazetta-inspired piece with an emphasis on composition and emotion

Sentinel

Photoshop

## TONY FOTI

Artist info



[www.tonyfotiart.com](http://www.tonyfotiart.com)

Tony is a 29-year-old freelance illustrator from Santa Cruz, California. His work can be found throughout the RPG and gaming industry, particularly as a part of *Dungeons & Dragons* and Fantasy Flight Games' *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* lines.

Frank Frazetta is a legend with a capital 'F'. His art ripples with power and energy, always capturing drama at its absolute apex. In Frazetta's world, every dial is turned up to 11. It viscerally depicts brutal warriors, powerful jungle women, fantastical beasts and gruesome demons that have been transplanted onto the canvas directly from his subconscious, and his work essentially launched the entire swords and sorcery genre of art into what it is today.

Despite enrolling at art school at the age of eight, Frazetta claimed to have learned very little from formal training, and essentially taught himself. From humble beginnings drawing comic strips for Al Capp, Frank's versatility and mastery of many mediums (including oil, watercolour, pencil, pen and ink) has allowed him to work in every corner of the illustration world. He has crafted movie posters, book covers, album covers and comic strips with equal mastery.

Most of us have heard the tales late at night as illustrators gather around the fire. "He painted without reference!" and "He finished them in a single evening!" are the two that many of us would find unbelievable. Few painters working anywhere near realism have had the ability to just sit down and crank out a final painting, but Frank was a force of nature.

For this tutorial, we will be painting a sentinel inspired by the world of Frank Frazetta, and in particular his powerful female characters. Standing vigilant with her totem cat, she watches over the land of her people. Rather than trying to just close our eyes and think up a Frazetta, however, we will be walking through each step in a way that will touch on some of what makes his paintings so captivating. Focusing on drama, strength, beauty, and composition, the hope is that you may find a way to let Frank's artistic world inspire your own.



## Begin the journey

Look at Frazetta's work, absorb it, and prepare to create something of your own



### 01 Thumbnails

Often, a great idea is not the first idea that comes to mind – even Frazetta had roughs. Start small, sketching out compositions the size of a box of matches until you've found something you love. The mind registers value (how light or dark something is) before colour, so many find it helpful to save that planning for the next step.



### 02 Create drama with colour

Now, it's time to explore a colour scheme. You're working small, so this is the best time to experiment. Do golden hues make it feel majestic? Does red evoke the feeling of fire? As long as you stay true to the values and composition of the thumbnail, things should start to take off.



## WORKING PROGRESS



Step 01, Thumbnails



Step 08, Keep your layers in check



Step 19, Charge the colours





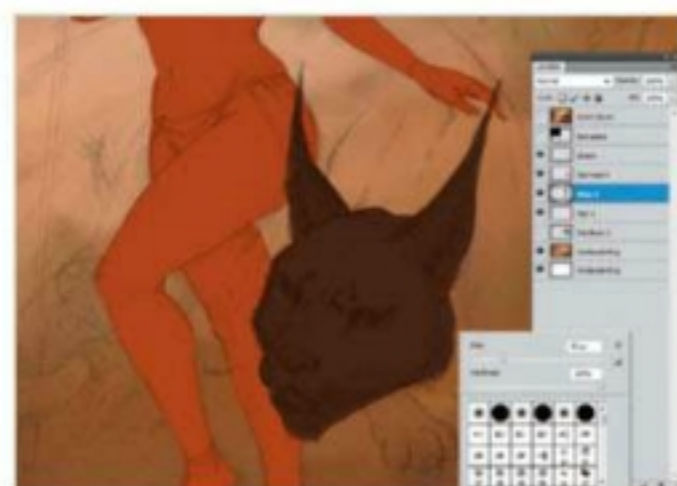
# Tutorial

## Paint a classic fantasy heroine

**03 Collect reference** It's time for some research and reference. Study images of feline skeletons, go hiking, take photographs of your friends and watch your cat walk around for a while. If getting to the zoo is too much trouble then even YouTube videos of jaguars and panthers can be helpful.



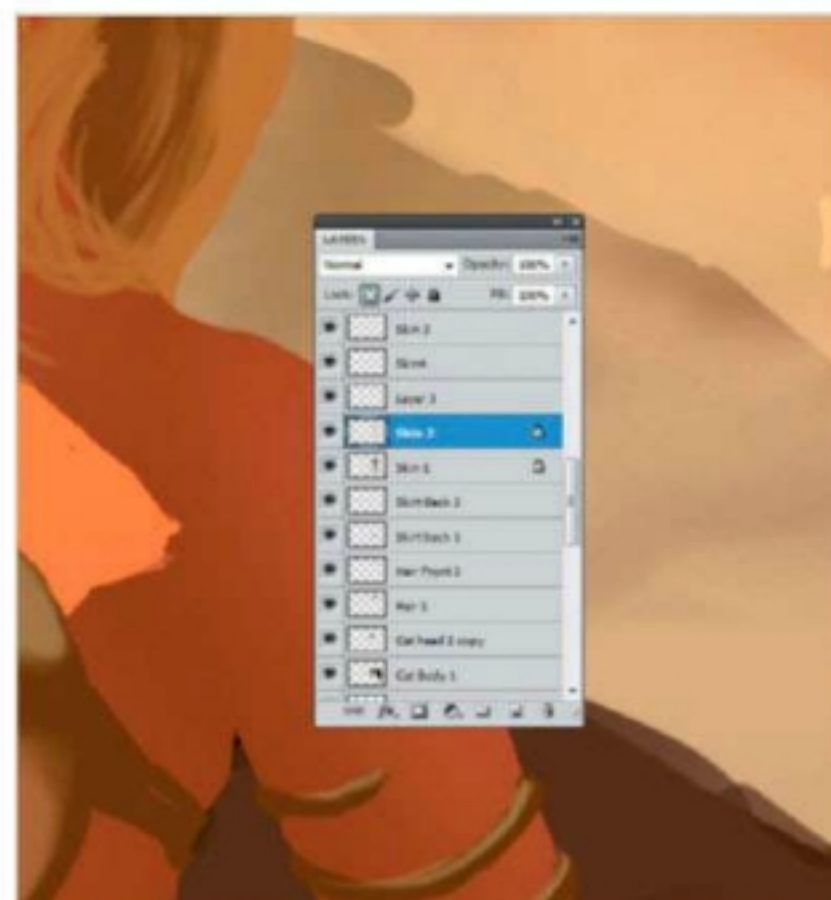
**04 Sketch it out** Now that you've got an idea of the composition and colours you want, studied your subject and collected all your references, it's time to combine all four of these into one statement. Focusing on outlines makes the conversion process to Photoshop take place a lot faster (for traditional sketches), and acts as a colouring book of sorts later on.



**05 Set up the painting** Scanning works best, but an evenly lit photo can get the job done in a pinch. Once the sketch is in Photoshop, open the Window>Channels panel. Hold Shift and click on the RGB channel. It will select the white space, so use Ctrl+Shift+I to invert the selection. Create a new layer, and then use Shift+Backspace to fill the selected area with the colour of your choice.

**06 Create the underpainting** Create a new layer below your transparent sketch. To get the ball rolling, fill the space with any middle-value colour. A monochromatic underpainting helps unify your piece and gets rid of the stress of a blank canvas. The trick is to not go too light or too dark, because it can obscure the drawing and create high contrast where it isn't called for.

**07 Lay down flat colours** Remember what we said about the sketch being used like a colouring book later on? Well, now is that time. Using layer names like Skin 1 and Cat 1 to keep things in order, and a flat round brush to start filling in the drawing. Adjust the opacity of the transparent sketch if you have trouble seeing edges.



**08 Keep your layers in check** This painting style begins with a lot of layers, and then starts rapidly flattening towards the middle. The benefit of keeping things separate is that you can treat the piece like a large, well-drawn (hopefully) colour sketch until you absolutely know you like it. It opens up a lot of room for experimentation during the final stages, which can create some great compositions.

**09 Lock layers for more control** In the Layers window, try clicking on the checked square in the top bar next to where it says Lock (aka Lock transparent pixels). Now, you can paint over whatever object is on that layer, and it won't put down anything in a space that hasn't already been painted on.

### STOP STRESSING OUT!

Try not to get too stressed out. High emotions like panic can redirect blood from the brain, making you less intelligent. Stressing out makes you stupid, so stop it. Remind yourself of this several times a day if you have to.



## 10 Use gradients to create interest

With the layer locking technique, you can use either the gradient tool (right-click or hold down the Paint Bucket) or a soft brush to give your objects a more natural feel. It's rare for objects to be lit perfectly even in real life. Look around the room and notice how every area of light and shadow has a diminishing intensity.



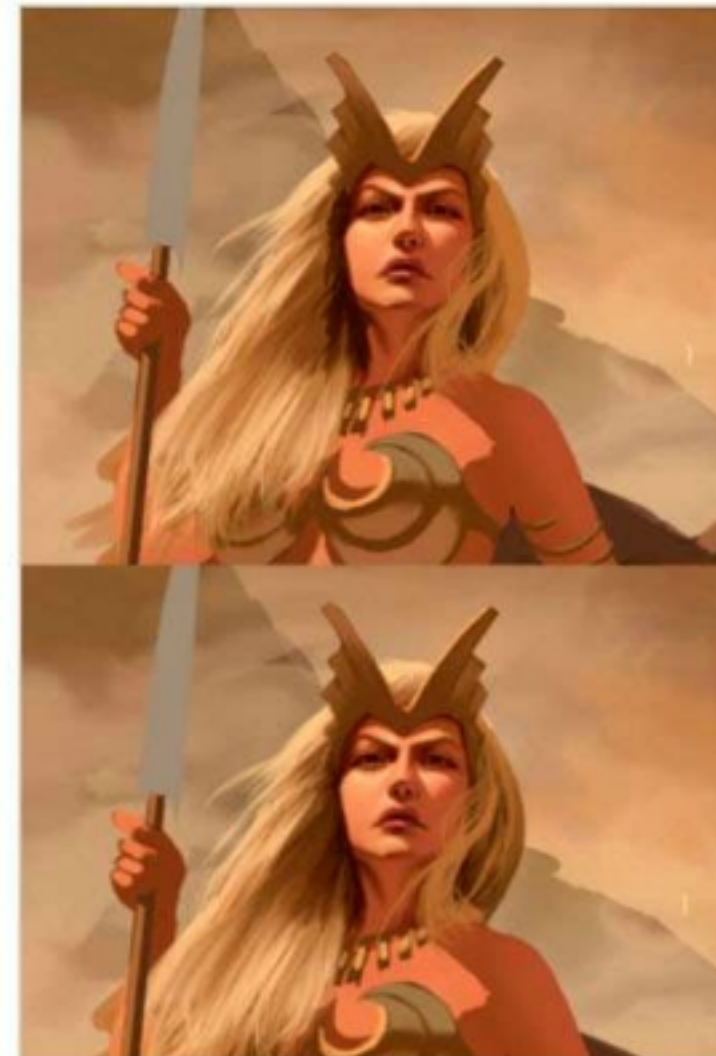
**11 Blend for edge control** Frazetta was a master of using edges to define anatomy. As light moves around the form, its edges shift. The cast shadow of a nose, for instance, is going to have hard edges. As light moves around a thigh, however, it's very smooth. Knowing when to use each kind of shadow will bring those shapes to life.

## SNACKS!

Just like the rest of the body, the brain has limits. Working all day may seem noble, but after several hours your processing power diminishes greatly. Take break and eat or drink something sugary. Glucose gives your brain an extra hour or so of high functioning. It's bad for you in numerous other ways, though, so only use it in a pinch.



**12 Light and shadow** An enormous amount of the impact of any piece is on the relationship of light and shadow, and Frank Frazetta pushed it for maximum impact. Our eyes are naturally drawn to the area with the most light/dark contrast, so use values in a way that strengthens what you want people to look at.



## 13 Draw with the Smudge tool

Some objects can be drawn with the Smudge tool itself, like flowing hair. Turning the strength of the blender anywhere between 75 and 95 per cent, put down a desired colour and then drag the pigment in the direction you want. It creates a similar effect to pushing oil paints around, and will help capture more of the Frazetta feel.



**14 Focus on emotion and anatomy** A huge aspect of Frank Frazetta's art, if not the main focus, was pushing drama and narrative with anatomy. Many of the women he painted were powerful, and to reflect their athletic nature he packed on the muscle (though mostly from the hips down). Create a body shape that reflects the lifestyle of your characters.



## 15 Value adjustments

With the main elements in place, it is now time to reap the fruits of using all these layers. You can use Image>Adjustments>Levels, Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation, or Image>Adjustments>Color Balance to tweak. However, it's worth noting that you should be aware that the colours never turn out perfect that way, and you will almost always need to go back in and adjust them by locking the layer and painting.



# Tutorial

Paint a classic fantasy heroine



**16 Strengthen the focal point** All values, shapes and colour in your painting should be leading the viewer toward your focal point. Whether the focus is on a character or a story element, make sure it comes across. Frazetta used abstract shapes and unnatural depictions of things like atmospheric perspective to guide the viewer, so consider gut feeling over natural representation if you're at a crossroads.



**17 Capture the intensity** Frank Frazetta's art is in constant motion, even when the characters aren't. To create that drama, really push the contrast wherever you can. Value contrast, colour contrast and shape contrast all draw the audience and heighten emotion when used well. Placing complex figures against simple spots in the background also keeps the action from overtaking the focal point.



## GET RID OF THE DETAILS



As you approach the end of a painting, you may find that you have been staring at the same image for so long that it becomes hard to view it objectively. Save a new version of the image as a jpeg, and then shrink it down to five (or less) per cent. The resulting image will be so pixelated and grainy that, when blown up, you can only pay attention to the overall composition. Having done this, you can judge the whole piece without getting too caught up in the details.

**18 Unify your elements** By merging the layers, you can now start blending edges. Try using colour to show that objects exist in the same space. Hues are reflected in the objects around them (see the rocks reflected in the cat's face), and sometimes Frazetta would go so far as to paint lower legs of his subject with the same colour scheme as the ground they walked on.



**19 Charge the colours** The image is entirely flattened at this point. To create drama, you need to use colour. Throughout his art, Frazetta would put bright greens, reds, yellows and blues in areas where there was no rhyme or reason for it outside of emotional impact. As long as you're not breaking the value scheme, it won't distract the eye.

## 20 Finishing touches

At this stage, we would generally advise taking some time away from your piece, and come back to it later on with a fresh pair of eyes. Look at your picture while it is flipped horizontally or even upside-down to establish whether or not there are any faults in the drawing or value modelling. Make changes if necessary.



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JUKKA  
RAJANIEMI

Artist info



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I'm a digital artist and an illustrator with seven years of experience working professionally in the industry. I started working as a game artist in various studios and just recently decided to try my luck with freelance illustration and commissions.

# Paint a quest-fantasy scene

**Jukka Rajaniemi** explains the basics of telling a story in the context of a landscape painting

Journey to the Lost City

*Photoshop*

When painting a picture about characters on a quest, the first thing you need to think about is where the story is going to happen. Think about all the obstacles the people on the quest have to get through and how you're going to show them in the landscape. Also consider what kind of landscape would have the right feeling for what you wish to express with your storytelling.

Typically a quest has roughly three phases. It starts from somewhere that's comfortable and safe. Then comes the journey that's usually full of obstacles that have to be passed, and last there's the end point, which changes the people on the quest somehow. This basic story arc has been used for thousands of years and you can use it as a starting point for planning your own artwork.

In order to show these things in a picture, you have to make them very clear to the viewer. Show the start, the middle and the end points in the picture. In this case it's the inn, the difficult mountainous landscape and the mysterious, magical city in the background. In addition to just showing the different parts of the journey in your picture, try to also give them the right atmosphere. For example, the starting point should feel safe and normal and even somewhat boring. The mountains should feel difficult and dangerous. In addition to the terrain, you can also manipulate the mood with lighting, colour and different kinds of shapes. After all, the underlying structure of the story is communicated through the artistic decisions you make. The viewer will get the feeling and the basic narrative of the story, even though they may not know the structure that it's originally based on.





## WORKING PROGRESS



Step 01, Start with sketches



Step 06, Start the painting



Step 15, Touch up the atmosphere



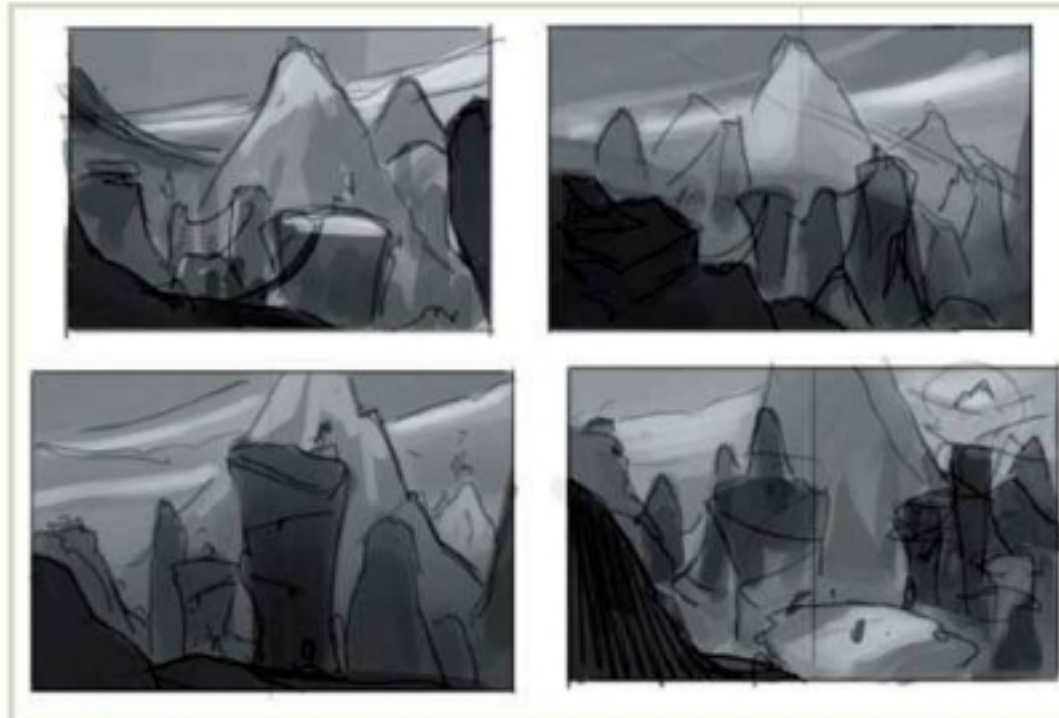


# An unexpected journey

How to create an environment for a story



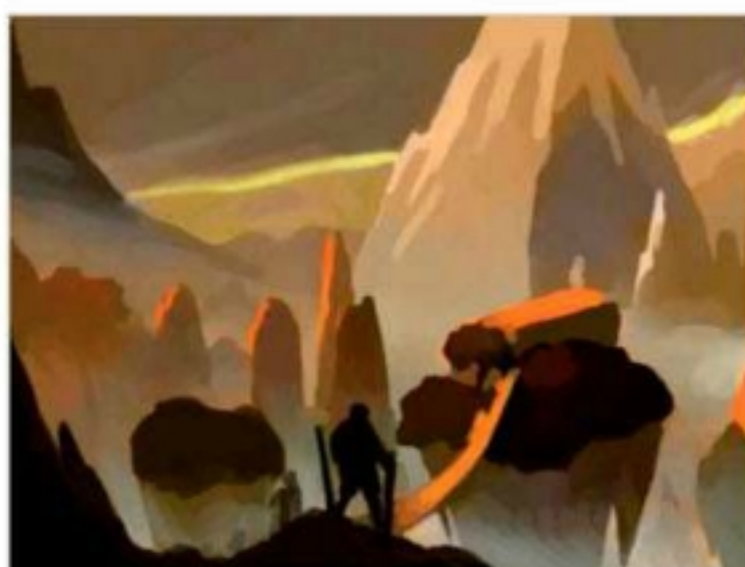
**01 Start with sketches** A good way to start an image is to do some research on the thing you're about to start working on, in order to understand the subject. Then you can start sketching some of the elements that you know are going to be in the picture as well as some basic compositional ideas.



**02 Thumbnails** After getting a rough idea of what the picture is going to be about, start drawing some thumbnails. Try out several ideas and see which one works best. You can do them in linework or as value studies, whatever works best for you.



**03 Value sketch** Do a rough value study for the painting. This doesn't necessarily have to be anything fancy, just try to make sure you get the values working in the composition before continuing too much further. Try to get the painting's focal point reading well and try to get a pleasing arrangement overall.



**04 Colour sketch** After getting the values working, do a colour study. Try out a colour scheme for the painting and see how it works before committing to a lot of effort painting the final image. These preliminary stages can save a lot of time and effort later as you have thought out the overall look of the painting early on.



**05 Line drawing** Now that you've done the studies, you can start working on the final picture by doing a line drawing that's detailed enough for your purposes. You don't need to detail everything, like the distant mountains for example. The purpose of the line drawing is to make the painting part easier by defining the forms in advance.

## GO THROUGH ALL THE PLANNING STAGES

When starting a painting, doing all the preliminary work like research and studies might feel like a lot of extra work, but it actually makes the final painting phase go much faster. If you don't plan things carefully enough in the beginning, you'll face those problems later on, and that does cause a lot of work!



**06 Start the painting** Put the line drawing on top of the colour study and adjust the painting further. The line drawing helps to define the details especially inside the forms where the light and shadow sides of objects meet. At this point, visualise all the forms as simple geometric forms like cylinders and ovals. Don't go crazy with the details right away.



**07 Paint the details** When you have got the main shapes blocked in, start painting the details. Create a layer on top of the line drawing and start detailing the rocks and all the other objects that are in the scene. Use reference material if you feel you need to refresh your memory on certain parts of the image.





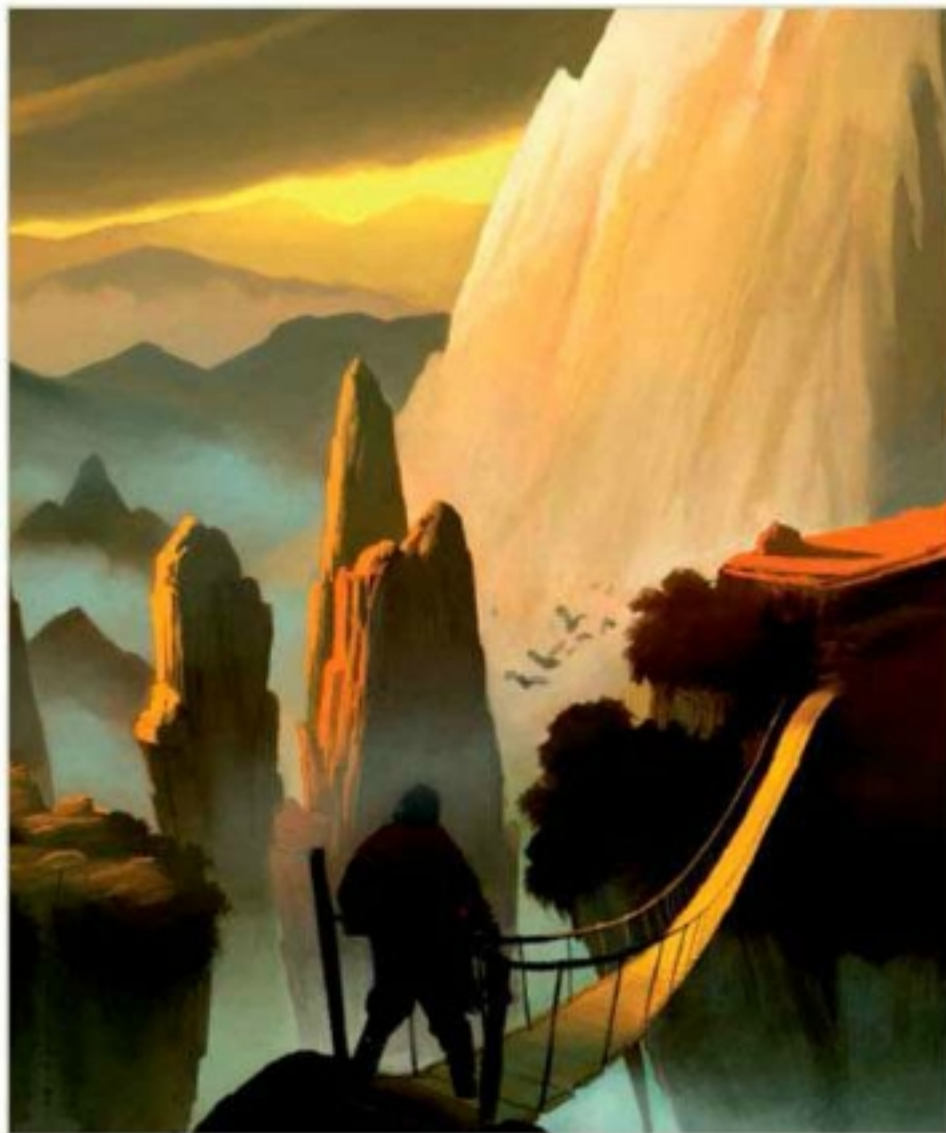
**08 Colour adjustments** Start making the colours pop now you have the basic modelling in place. Go for more dramatic lighting and punch up the colours by playing with the Color Balance sliders in Photoshop, and manually touch them up with a large brush to get the right effect.



**09 Simplify distant elements** A lot of detail isn't always good, especially in distant landscapes, so some of the forms should be flattened, especially on the shadowy sides of the rocks. Most details happen where the light meets the shadow, but other areas work well when kept simple.

## GET YOUR VALUES RIGHT FIRST

Getting the values right at the beginning is extremely important for getting the composition to work well. For keeping things in control, try to limit your composition to just three to five values. Colour becomes easier too when you solve your values first.



**10 Atmospheric perspective** Throw some fog in front of the rocks in the midground area of the picture to help create some atmosphere between the different objects in the scene. Give the inn on the far left a touch of fog or apply a gradient to make it recede back into space.



**11 Add characters** Characters are important, but in this image they are actually secondary to the landscape and are treated more like embellishment than focal points. The characters are really nothing but silhouettes and the challenge is to depict who they are and what they are doing just by using simple shapes.



**12 Create space using birds** The same goes for the birds as for the characters; they're decoration in places that feel like they could use some further detailing. You can also use the birds to lead the eye of the viewer and suggest space and distance, by making them different sizes depending on where they are.



**13 Tidy the silhouettes** Next, the edges of the shapes in the landscape need some more work. Making them cleaner and more detailed will make the shapes themselves feel more lifelike as well, although they are mostly just flat and lacking in major details. Most of this picture is about shapes, so making sure the edges look good is important.



**14 Finalise the characters** The characters have just been plain silhouettes up until now, so a little bit of light is needed to make them seem more three-dimensional and to bring the pair to life. Giving the two characters simple dark and light sides is enough for what is needed here.



**15 Touch up the atmosphere** Some light fogging is created in the foreground area to finalise the picture and to add a little variation to the colouring. It takes away some of the darkest tones that may have been a little too harsh. The fog is also useful for creating a greater illusion of space.



# Fantasy iconography and how to use it

**Benjamin Mounsey** looks at using the atmosphere of your artwork to create a narrative around your character

The Wizard's Library

*Photoshop*

**F**or this tutorial we are going to be creating an illustration of a kindly old wizard, sitting in his mystical library. We'll look at ways we can use iconography to infer things about the character, and how the design and structure of the environment and composition of the illustration will affect the way we interpret the character's personality.

The first thing to do is to decide how you want the viewer to feel about the character when looking at the piece. It is important to make this decision before you start, as it will dictate many aspects of your image. So for this illustration, we want the wizard to feel wise, but warm and friendly. This is where we will use some props to create a bit of a narrative. On

the table in front of the wizard are some open notebooks, in which he appears to have been writing some mysterious document. However, to make it stand out, and give it a touch of mystery, he is writing the document in glowing ink. Surrounding him are piles of books, with which he is conducting his research.

From his open body posture and friendly expression you can see that he is an approachable character. In his hands are a pipe, and a glass, perhaps of wine. His reading glasses are positioned on the desk in front of him, and the general feel is that he is taking a well-earned break from a long night of research.

Your light sources are always very important in this kind of illustration, because they will

prove to be one of your main tools in defining the atmosphere. As you can see, the candles create a warm atmosphere that helps to reinforce the wizard's friendly appearance. The second light source is the moon through the open window, and in conjunction with the mist pouring over the windowsill, this helps to create an air of mystery.

The environment itself is also an important consideration. The crowded environment combines with the warm candlelight to create a cosy atmosphere. The objects scattered around the wizard such as the quill pen, the devices, and the other oddments are tools to enable you to hint towards your desired character traits, in this case, warmth and wisdom.





## BENJAMIN MOUNSEY

Artist info



[www.benjaminmounsey.com](http://www.benjaminmounsey.com)

I am a freelance digital and mixed media artist hailing from Bristol in the South West of England. I love to create a visual narrative through my art and illustration, and specialise in creating an engaging atmosphere in my works. I create fantasy and other styles.

## WORKING PROGRESS



Step 01, Lines



Step 02, Detail



Step 03, Fine detail







## The wizard's library

A look at the main steps in creating this image



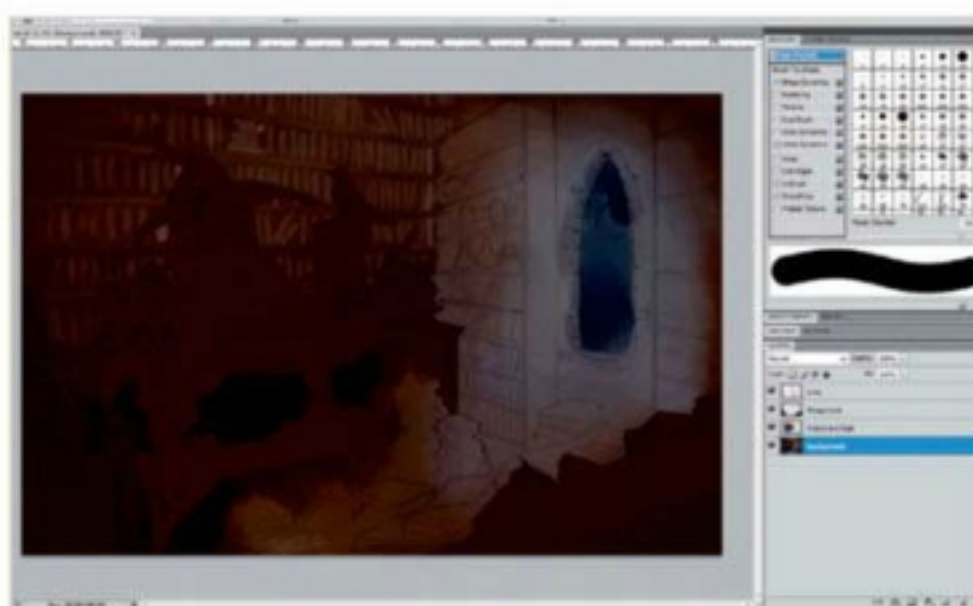
**01 Lines** The main considerations for the line art are first, the posture of the wizard, and second, the perspective of the room. Don't worry about getting all the precise details down, just try and make sure you have an idea of where everything will be positioned.



**02 Background** For this step, just use a soft, round brush and roughly paint in what you think the general colours might look like. A lavender sort of colour around the window, and a nice warm brown across the rest of the image, sets a warm but magical atmosphere.

### Focus

You want to try and keep the bulk of your detail focused around the wizard. Some details around the rest of the image are necessary to create some interest, but too much can be visually distracting for the viewer.



**03 Block colours** Start blocking in some colours. Try to separate your layers by plane – so the foreground could be on one layer, then the books on the floor, then behind that the desk and the wizard, and so on. You can also start roughly painting in some books in the empty bookshelves. Just a quick brushstroke is enough to hint at the presence of a book!



**04 Rough lighting** At this stage, we have blocked in all the colours, and now we want to start working out our light sources. It's likely that the majority of your time will be spent on the wizard, but the moonlight is the most obvious and simple light source, so start painting in some planes of light on the books.



**05 Second light source** Now we want to start thinking about our candlelight, so paint in a few candle flames so we can see exactly where the light is coming from. You can use radial gradients set to Overlay, Color Dodge or Color Burn to help warm up that side of the room now that it has some candles in it.



**06 The wizard** We want to make a couple of decisions about our wizard now. A purple robe will fit in with the warm colour scheme nicely, but also separate the wizard from the background a bit, as he is the main focus of this illustration.



## 07 Add volume to the background

Now we want to start adding a little bit of definition to the background with the use of some shadows. At this stage we are also slowly working in the lighting on the desk and the wizard. Merge all the layers, and then start painting directly onto the image.



## VOLUME

Multiple light sources can give you some great opportunities to add volume to an illustration. For example, the glowing green tubes add a backlight to the end of the quill, and the stack of books. This really helps to imply their positioning in a more contextual, three-dimensional sort of fashion.



**08 Detail** Now we want to start really picking out some of the finer details with the light sources. Define some rim lighting on the books that are facing the window, and start to really warm up the desk that's in front of the wizard.



**09 Fine detail** At this stage you should have pretty much nailed the lighting across the image. You want to be looking at picking out tiny details, such as curly hairs on the wizard's beard, stars in the night sky, glowing writing on the notebook and smoke coming from the pipe. Use new layers for the plant and the writing, to preserve the image behind.

## TEXTURES

Texture overlays are a great way of implying detail across an image while reducing the amount of actual work you have to do yourself. I can heartily recommend [www.lostandtaken.com](http://www.lostandtaken.com) as a fantastic resource for masses of completely free high-res textures. It's almost too good to be true.



## 10 Texture and atmosphere

Finally, create some atmospheric mist on a new layer, flowing across the front of the image. Use a few texture layers and overlays to help adjust the atmosphere until you have the warm yet mysterious feel that you are looking for.



# How to design an evil character

**Drazenka Kimpel** explains how to turn a beautiful person into a cold, sinister character by using shapes, colours and environment

Ominous Glance

Photoshop



## WORKING PROGRESS



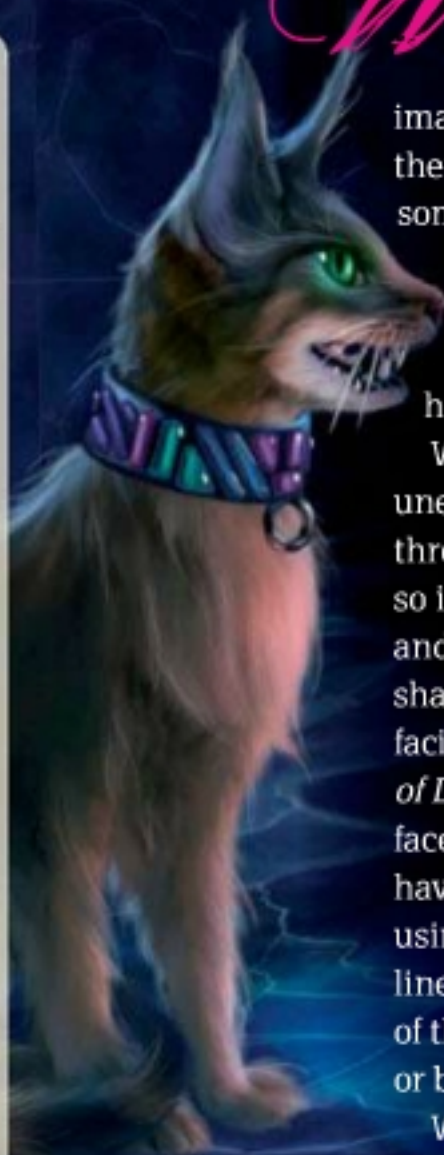
Step 01, Composition sketch



Step 16, The action screen



Step 25, Make-up



When we think of evil, in most cases our mind tends to visualise grotesque and horrid images. However, beauty is skin-deep, and therefore we cannot say for sure that something beautiful is essentially good or that something less than attractive is bad. As artists, we can only exploit the good and bad inherent in a character through visual representation with the help of colours, shapes, materials and basic environment.

While sharp-edged shapes insinuate a feeling of fright and unease, we can evoke almost any imaginable feeling solely through colour. Evil is associated with coldness and darkness, so in these circumstances we would pick a cool colour palette and create deep shadows in our illustration. Apart from the shapes, materials and colours, evil can be suggested through facial expressions, make-up and dress. In the book *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde said: "Sins are written across one's face." It can be hard to convey someone's soul on a canvas, so we have to resort to facial make-up to amplify those effects. When using make-up in this context, we should think more along the lines of tribal-style face paint rather than cosmetic accentuation of the facial features using mascara, red lipstick or blush.

With that in mind, for this illustration we are going to concentrate on an extremely motivated, cold and calculated ruler – one who is willing to destroy anything that stands in her way. She is powerful, knowledgeable and wealthy. Her power is shown in her environment through the items that surround her, as well as the arrogance and self-assured nature of her leisurely pose. She is lounging on a chaise, indulging in luxuries, while behind her an entire planet is being destroyed under her auspices. We are going to use narrative elements, colours and shapes to portray this callous, calculating villain.





## DRAZENKA KIMPEL

Artist info



[www.creativedust.com](http://www.creativedust.com)

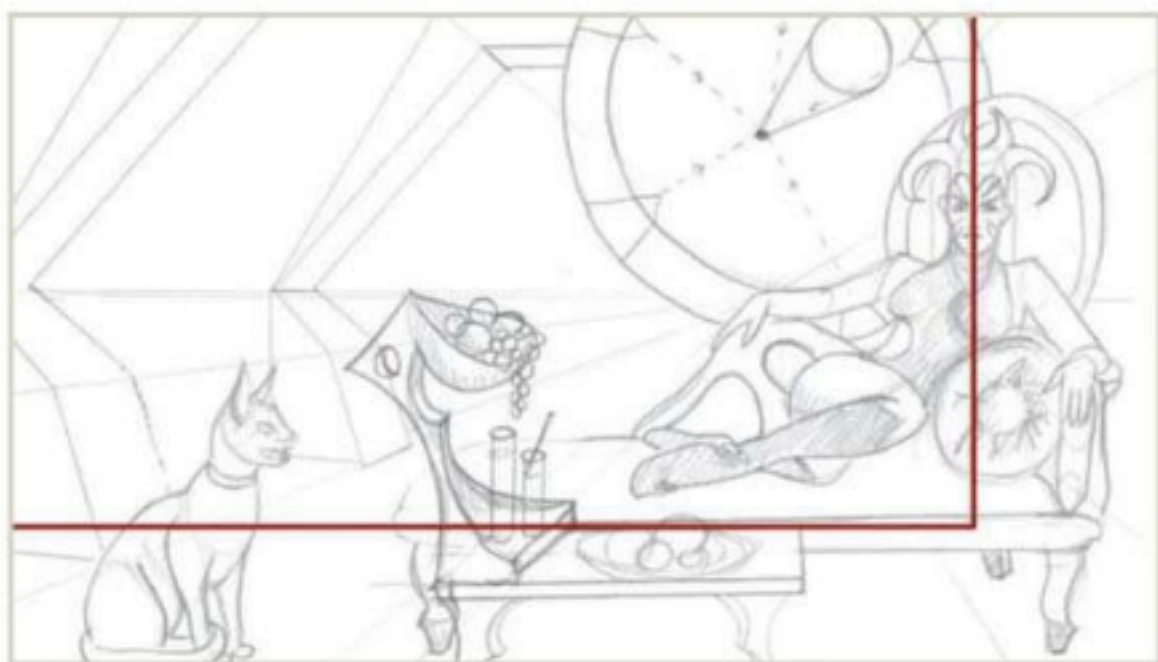
Drazenka has a broad range of self-taught Photoshop and Illustrator skills. She is influenced by Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite painters combined with the flare of fantasy. She has provided illustrations for a variety of gaming, comic and publishing companies.





# The lair of the villain

Discover the importance of supporting elements in character design



**01 Composition sketch** Start with an idea, and put it into a sketch, paying close attention to the perspective. If necessary, make variations and decide on the most comfortable one. Make sure your final composition has strong character placement and that the eye easily follows around. In this case, most important information follows an L-shaped compositional line.



**02 Create the mood** It is very important to pick the right colour palette early so that you create the right mood for the painting. Dark blue colours dominate here to depict the outer space environment, cold and uninviting atmosphere and some technological elements. Block in the colour loosely and do not worry about going over the edges.

## ORGANISE YOUR LAYERS

If you are working on a intricate painting that requires a lot of detail, your file may have an excessive amount of layers. Organise your layers into groups, and create a group for each area you are working on. That way, everything stays editable, and you can find your way around easily.



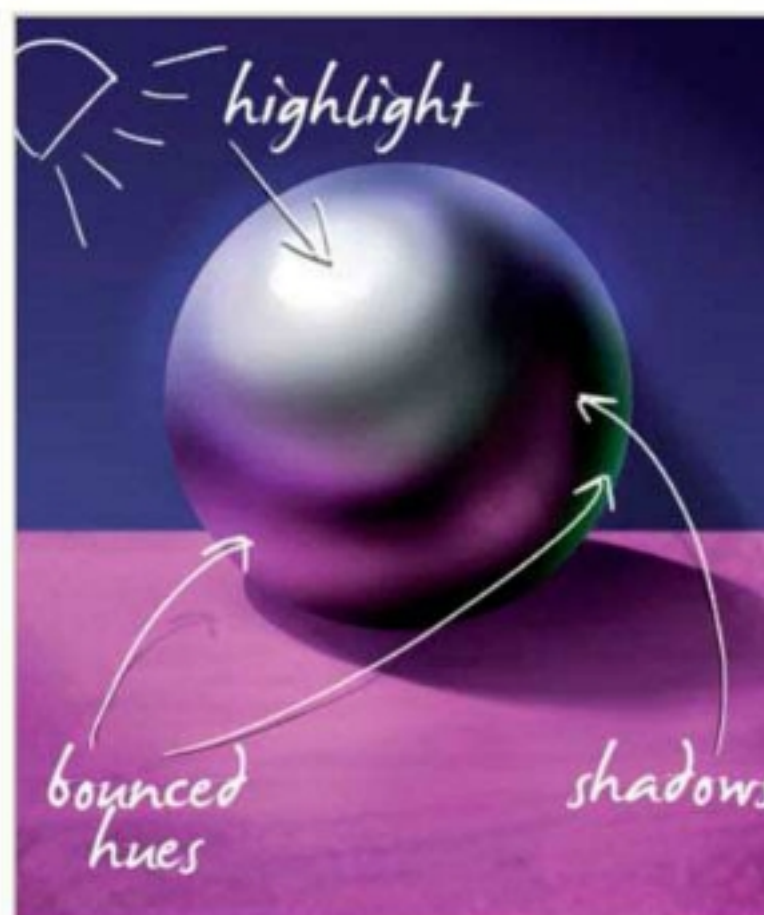
**03 Light sources** Before you go any further, determine your light sources so that you can stay consistent from beginning to end. The main light source here is the glow of the screen, with secondary light coming from the window. Once the lights have been established, work in the shadows and values right away. This is the most important part. Once this is done, the rest is fun!



**04 Non-human skin** Sample a few shades of colour from the original sketch to build the palette. You should avoid using human tones. Instead, your character should have an alien type of skin and be very cold-looking and pale. Use shades of blue, purple, light pink and grey. We've gone for a clammy, lifeless look. Use bristle brushes with varied opacities for blending.



**05 Build up the evil** Things that surround the character should suggest haughtiness and darkness. Use a hard round brush to paint in human skulls around parts of the furniture to suggest the character's past and future intentions. Include lighter shades to add some contrast to the background. Remember to use the Eyedropper to keep the shading consistent.



## 06 Deal with metals

There are couple of things to remember when painting metal, one of which being that the contrast between shades will be amplified due to the reflective surface. Therefore, the shadows will be deeper, highlights brighter and the bounced hues bolder. Paint all the shading and hues, and try to avoid shortcuts like the Dodge and Burn tools.





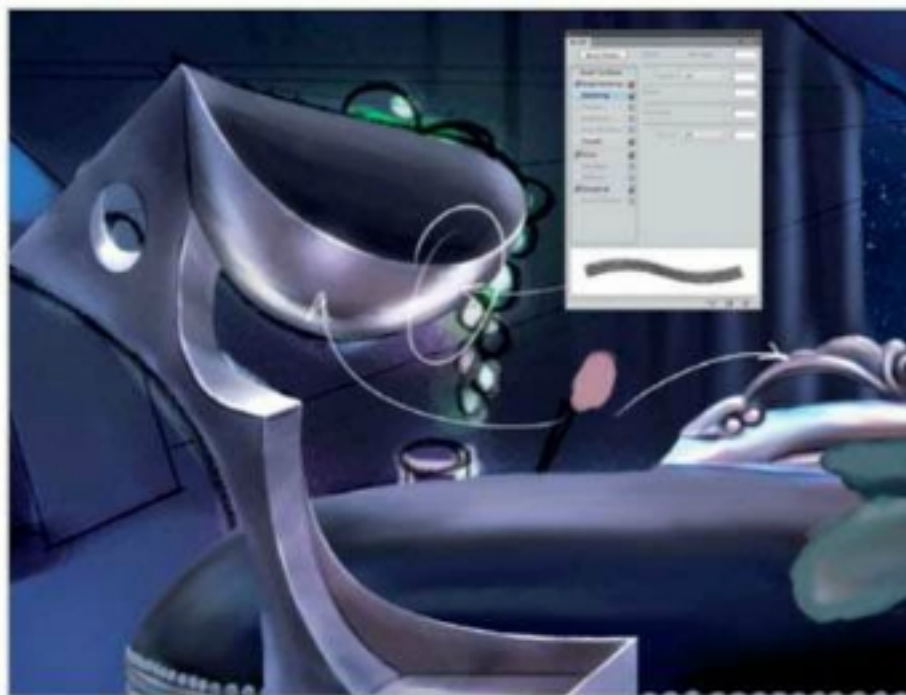
**07 Metal furniture** On a separate layer, use the Pen tool to outline the shape of the table and fill it with solid colour. Be aware of the proper perspective. If necessary, use several layers for each part of the surface. This separation is good for keeping lines as clean as possible, as well as for helping to shade the metallic material with ease.



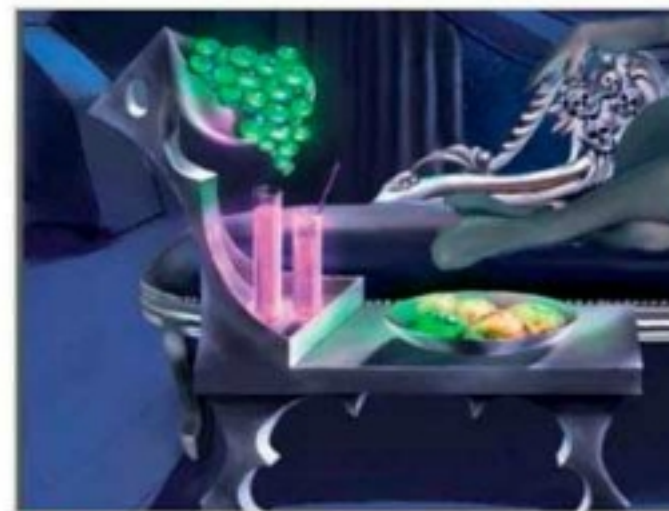
**08 Refine the surface** Convert the path into a selection and work on refining the metal surface. Use Airbrush Pen Opacity Flow (but not the common airbrush), or any texture brush set to low opacity, and paint in the surface with broad strokes. Be aware of any contours, as well as the light source.

## USE REFERENCE MATERIALS

Whether you are painting man-made or organic materials, or creating something non-existent, a good reference is a must. On one hand it will help you get the realism right, and on the other it will spark a whole new idea in your head. Keep an organised and easily accessible reference library.



**09 Finishing touches** Select a fine bristle brush or any dotted hair brush, and blend some of the rough strokes to resemble a brushed metal texture. Sample a highlight shade of metal from the chaise. On a separate layer, apply it to the table surface for consistency. Set the blend mode to Overlay or Soft Light.



**10 Tell a story** As you progress further into the painting, include some narrative elements to further describe the location and character. Besides the furnishings, organic items add special touches. To make them appear alien-looking, use bright, fluorescent colours. Lastly, make them all glow by gently airbrushing with corresponding colour, and set the blend mode to Overlay.



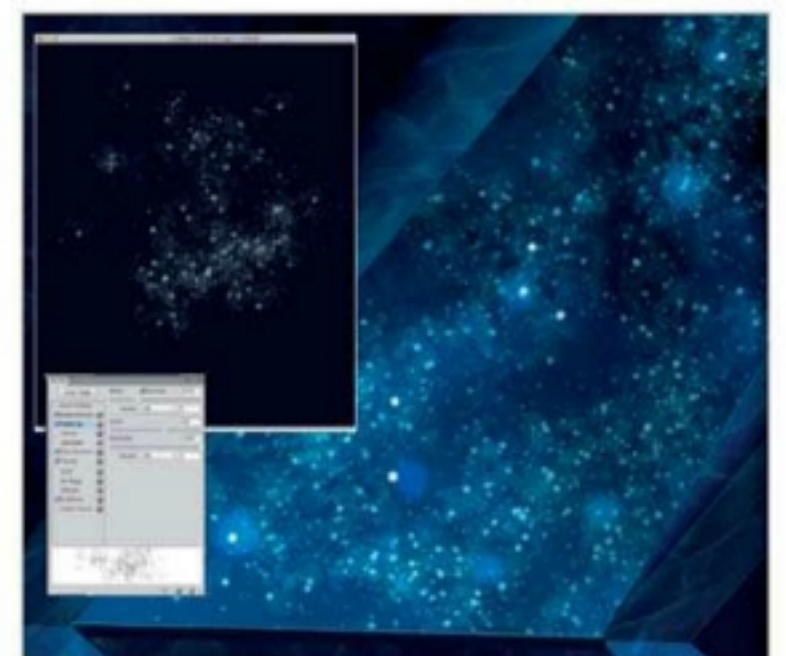
**11 Work the room** Use geometric shapes such as squares, cylinders and triangles in order to develop the futuristic dwelling. Utilise the Pen tool to outline each shape at a time, and fill them with colour with the Paint Bucket. This will speed up the process and give the painting nice, sharp edges. When filling in the shapes, keep in mind where the light is coming from.



**12 Surface texturing – marble** Marble can lend a sterile and somewhat morbid effect to an environment. Start off by painting in some veins (resembling tree branches) with a lighter colour than the surface. On a separate layer, follow the lines with a softer brush on one side to blend it with the background. Then, pick some lower and higher shades of blue and paint in non-uniform blotches in the background. Use the Blur tool to help with blending where needed.



**13 Double-check perspective** Before you devote your time to developing background any further, check the perspective and make sure all your angles are covered and correct. Use this time to refine any surfaces that need more attention, and if needed evaluate the contrast levels of the background.

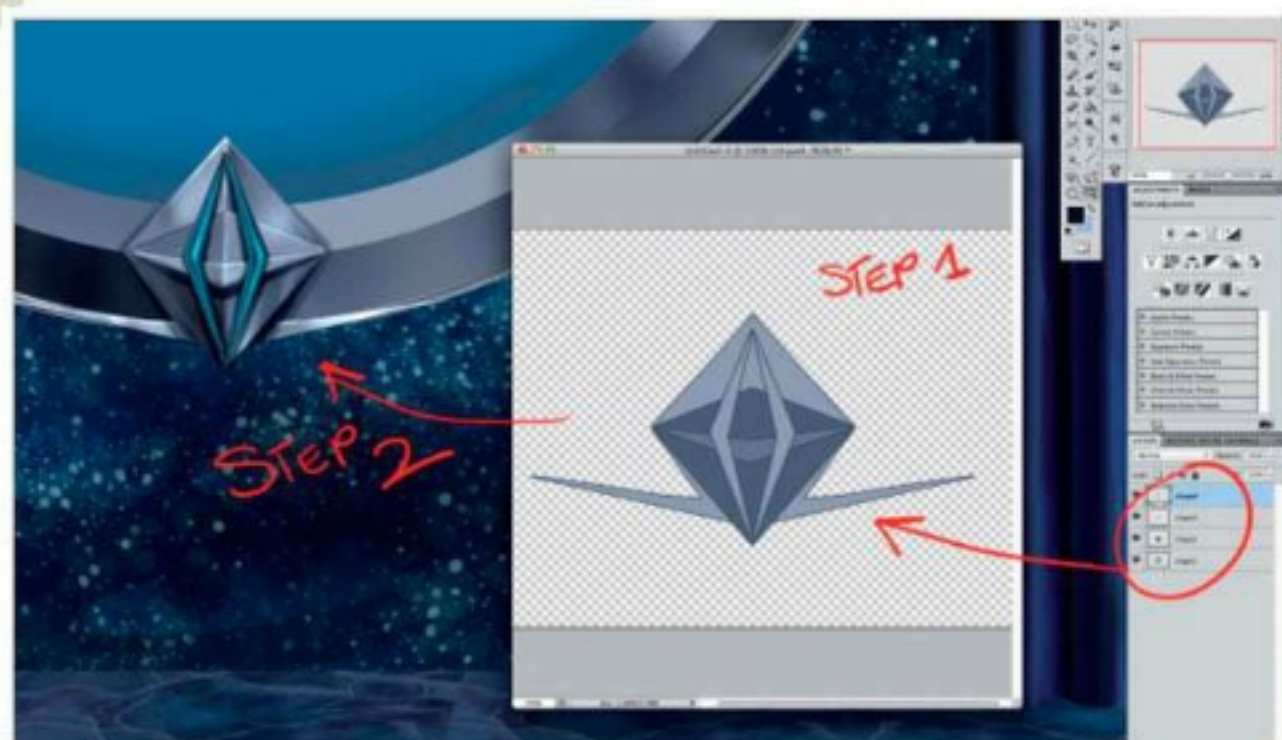


**14 Constellation** The addition of a celestial sky will further communicate the placement of the character. To add a starry sky, use a Splatter Brush with a variety of dot sizes and opacities. With a fluid motion, spray the stars across the area. Amplify a few of them with an Airbrush set to Opacity, and use any textured brush set to Opacity to brush some highlights onto the background.



# Tutorial

How to design an evil character



**15 Circular map frame** Create an intricate, sci-fi map frame design with basic shapes. It is helpful to use separate layers for each shape so that you can build more detail and remain clean and precise. If you are struggling to find a cool design, by all means use some references to help you along.

**16 The action screen** This is one of the most important areas of the painting. It clearly shows the character's ambitions and target. Create rocket icons on separate layers and duplicate them on the screen. The same goes for the honeycomb background pattern and alien alphabet. As a finishing step, airbrush some areas and set that layer mode to Overlay to create a glowing effect.



**17 Pet presence** Create a new layer and block in some generic shades with reddish-beige for highlights and deep blue-green for lowlights. The animal's appearance will be subtle, so use a muted colour palette. Use broad brushstrokes at this stage so that the proper form is created. Sample some colour from the background to help blend the body a bit more.



**18 Fur up the animal** Let's refine the body. Pick up any dotted brush and paint in some darker and lighter streaks around the animal's body. It is important that you use a fluid motion following the body's contours to create fur-like texture. Your strokes should be short but gentle. The believability of the outcome will depend upon your pen pressure.

## FLIP YOUR CANVAS

The ability to flip the canvas is one of the many neat advances that have been recently made in digital media. By doing so, you can get a glimpse of things that need fixing. Also, rotating the canvas to various angles helps you get the lines painted straight without using a line tool, so you can keep your work looking as much like a painting as possible, with Photoshop use looking minimal.



## 19 Bring up the details

Following the light source, use the same dotted brush to paint in some fine highlights on the upper body towards the window. To push the details even more, draw some fine longer strands of fur here and there. Do that with the Single Fine Round Brush. To finish things off, this fine animal should get a luxurious stone necklace.



**20 Dress the character** Use some violet hues to block in the torso, cutting out some interesting designs around her midriff. Use black to paint in the boots, again cutting out a part for designs. On a separate layer, draw swirls around the edge of the upper topside and around the boot's ankles and top edges. Highlight and lowlight the swirls according to the light source.



**21 Headdress** Use the Pen tool to outline a bunch of cylindrical, diamond and wavy shapes. It saves time to do one side and copy-paste and flip it horizontally to create symmetrical sides. Make sure you separate each piece by adding shadows and highlights. Set a separate layer to Multiply, making one half of the headdress darker to create dimension.



**22 Transparent fabric** Painting transparent fabric can be tricky to get right. The organza in this example is much looser than chiffon, and it appears wrinkled. To effectively achieve the desired look, use a small Hard Round brush and draw random lines resembling folds. Create a separate layer and place it underneath the line drawing, then with the same Hard Round brush set to 20% Opacity and a large size, paint some body into the fabric. When the strokes overlap, it will give you the effect of overlapping fabric.

**23 Make-up** At this stage you can have as much fun as you want. Use colours that are cold and menacing, like purple in combination with yellow, white and blue. Paint in the areas that accentuate the eyes and eyebrow areas the most. Black outlines add a villainous look to any character. Don't limit yourself: draw lines across the face in an appealing manner, or paint areas that are not usually painted in normal life.



**24 Add shadows** Now, look at the painting as a whole. There is really not much depth to it as it is. Shadows can be applied during the process or at the very end, but they have to be added, otherwise all your hard work will look like it was pasted on. Create a new layer set to Multiply, and paint in the areas where shading is necessary.



**25 Fortify the highlights** In principle, the same laws of shading apply here. For the sake of strengthening the overall look and feel, create a new layer and set it to Overlay. Use an airbrush with a light blue colour selected and paint in more highlights – the ones stronger closer to the light and the weaker ones further away from it.



# Fantasy architecture

**Alexander Thümmler** teaches you how real-world references can inspire your fantasy buildings and scenes

Blood Temple

*Painter, Photoshop*



## ALEXANDER THÜMLER

Artist info



[www.minzketchbook.com](http://www.minzketchbook.com)

Alexander is a concept artist and illustrator, studying design in Nuremberg. He does live paintings with an audience or on the internet via Livestream.

In the field of entertainment design and illustration, you are almost always faced with the prospect of creating virtual worlds that include some kind of architecture, or even whole infrastructures. Whether it is science fiction art or a classic medieval fantasy image, from the very first second the person looking at this kind of illustration should be convinced that the world he or she is observing could actually exist. Even if there is magic going on or you can see floating buildings in the air, if the artwork contains a consistent visual style then every kind of architecture in every kind of environment will work.

That is why it is so important to be inspired by actual civilisations, both ancient and modern. Fantasy architecture, for example, is often inspired by gothic elements like castles and cathedrals. You can create a new fantasy scenario by combining more than one civilisation and their architectural styles. As long as the elements hang together in a way that is physically possible (even if the physics are based on magic), the viewer has to believe that what he or she sees is real – even if it is not. Natural patterns, random abstract shapes or objects you might never have thought of using as building blocks before can also inspire a scene, but nonetheless physical functionality is the most important aspect of making fantasy scenes seem possible.

In this illustration, we take inspiration from exotic ancient architecture. Old, lost civilisations like the Mayans and Aztecs can be truly inspiring when it comes to creating your own fantasy architecture. Explorers are still finding undiscovered ruins to this day, and the fact that we know little to nothing about their use makes the Mesoamerican motifs that they use a visual shorthand for mystery and magic, while allowing us to integrate fantasy elements into something that's conceivably from the real world.







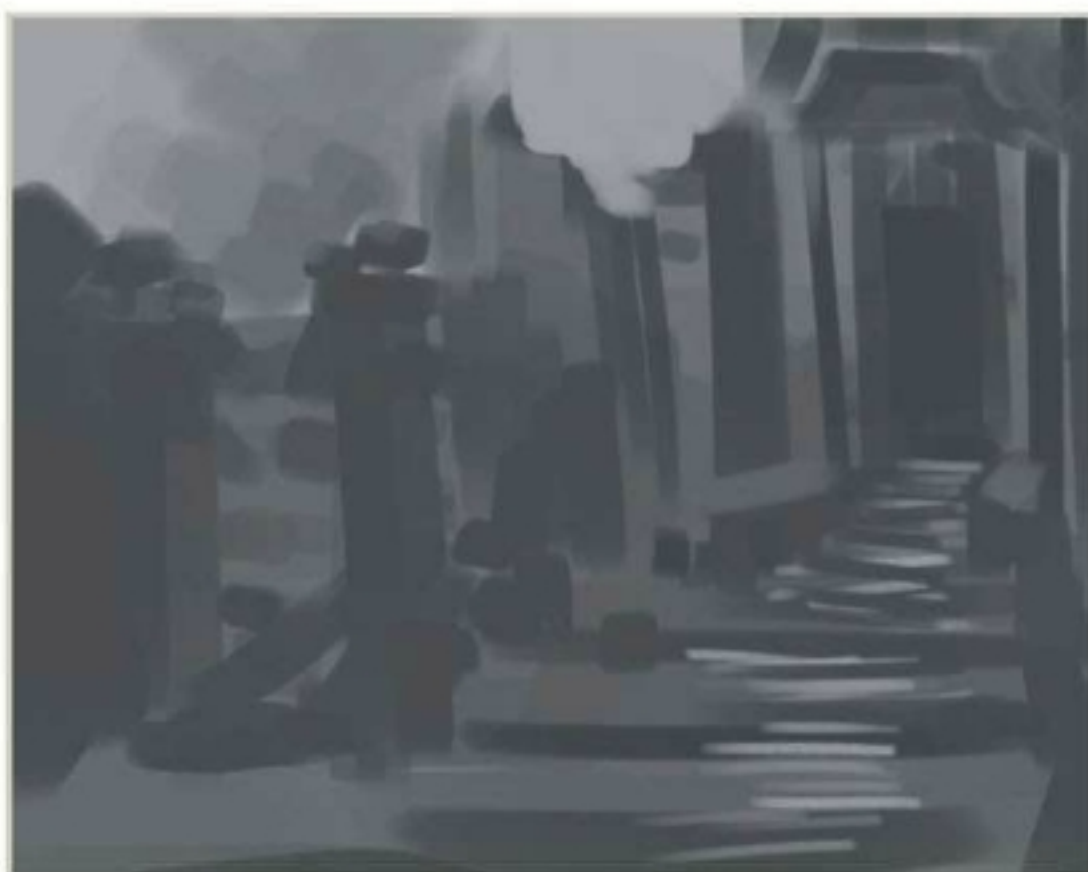


# Explore ancient ruins

Develop your idea from sketch to finished piece

## 01 Basic sketch

Start to paint some very simple shapes and silhouettes with a big rough brush to find a composition that works for you. It's not necessary to care a lot about the architecture or even the perspective – just try to find a way to place all the elements you want to show.



**02 Shapes** Once the basic sketch is done, start thinking about the general perspective and architectural elements you want to use in the painting. Pick a thinner brush to define the shapes with a bit more detail and bring a little more design into the abstract structure.



**03 Value** It's important to bring out focal points as soon as possible, as they lead the viewer through the whole image. Use a large soft brush on a layer set to Overlay to define dark and light areas and work out the basic values of the painting. This will give the painting a visual guideline.



## 04 Mirror

Start sketching in more details of the architecture and the plants growing around the structure to work out the scene. Flip the canvas horizontally and vertically in order to check out the composition and the general tilt of the image from time to time.

## MIRRORING

During the process of painting, it often happens that you get too used to your image and overlook mistakes in the composition. It's important to flip the canvas horizontally and vertically as often as possible during the whole working process to get a renewed view of the painting.



**05 Finished thumbnail** Don't spend too much time rendering the thumbnail, as this is just one of many thumbnails that you can draw before starting the final illustration. Bring in some last-minute details to refine the composition and highlight focal elements by using fast and loose strokes.



**06 Line art** Now that the architecture and perspective are roughed out, you can draw a simple perspective grid with one, two or even three vanishing points and begin to draw the architectural line art on a separate layer. Constructing three-dimensional objects is not easy, so take your time.





**07 Colour** In this step you have to think about the atmosphere and general lighting of the scene to figure out how these things affect the material the temple is made of. Once you're happy with your idea, start painting in the basic colours of the temple and the shadows underneath the line art.



**08 Light direction** Now, drop the line art onto the canvas and start to paint over it. Always keep the angle of the light in your mind to prevent mistakes from occurring. Create some rough brushstrokes as a raw base for the foliage of the trees and bushes growing around the temple. A low-lit, evening angle for the lighting adds mystery and menace.

## SATURATION

To maintain balanced values, it's important to hide the colour of an image from time to time and see it completely desaturated. The perception of tones is often influenced by colour overstimulation and the colour contrast.

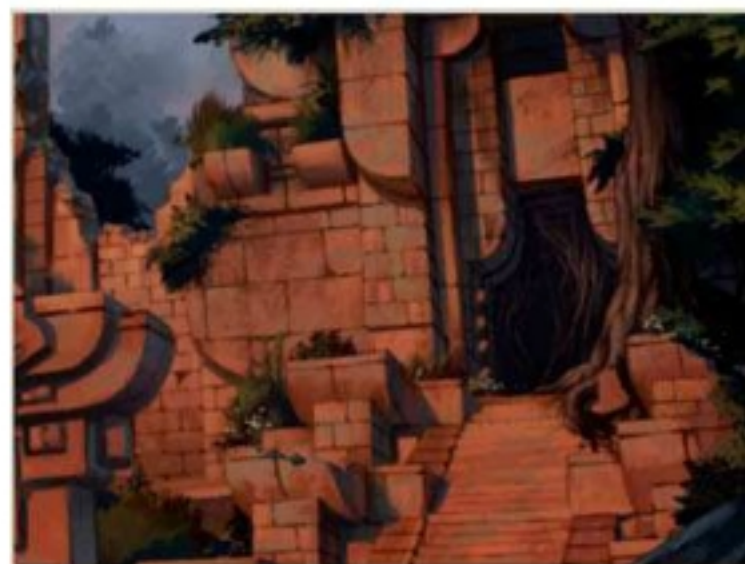


## 09 Develop depth

Continue rendering the architecture as subtly as possible and bring depth into the image by painting faded trees or other parts of the temple into the background. Make use of the lighting angle and atmospheric perspective in order to enhance the eerie atmosphere of the scene.



**10 Destroy the temple** Once you've rendered the surfaces, you can start destroying the architecture. Paint some debris, broken walls and statues. Add some colour variety to the boulders to make them look old and ruined. Remember, you're aiming for the look of somewhere that has been lost for thousands of years.



**11 Refine the details** Use a thin brush to draw reliefs, gaps and cracks on the walls to make the whole building look ancient and ruined, and add some more leaves and roots to show that this is an abandoned place. You will want the viewer to wonder what happened to the original inhabitants and feel vaguely unsettled.



**12 Build up the story** To help the viewer get into the scene, add some story elements. Here, explorers are shown making their way into the dark doorway at the heart of the image. We put them in with the image flipped to check that they read correctly.





**13 Accents** Bring more life into the scene by adding additional trees, grass, bushes, flowers and ferns. Accentuate some elements of the ruined temple by adding a little bit more saturation if they merge too much with the whole structure.



**14 Hint at a terrible secret** Another detail often seen in ancient ruins and temples is art itself. Temples often have a lot of murals, reliefs and statues to show rituals and other events that happened in the past, or prophecies that will influence the future. Draw in some relief details on the walls – these details feature giant, magical figures demanding worship and sacrifice from smaller, more human-looking ones.



### STEP BACK

It's often easier to improve the composition of a painting by looking at the image in a very small format. Because there is a loss of information due to the scaling on the screen and the fixed number of pixels, it's advisable to view the image on the whole screen and step back. In this way, even the smallest details contribute to the overall image.

**15 Last-minute values** To finish the painting, use a Color Balance adjustment layer to make all the colours mesh with each other perfectly. Finally, use a layer set to Overlay to highlight the focal points once again, bringing out the contrast on the stairway, door, figures and temple artwork.



**Style School**  
Art genres in a nutshell

## Fantasy civilisations

How one artist combined two cultures to create a fantasy third

Thomas Cole was famous for his paintings of the US during the 19th Century, but he also produced a series of paintings called 'The Course of Empire' in which he charted the imaginary evolution of an ancient city. It is a great example of combining real-world motifs (in this case Greek architecture and art, along with the American frontier) to create what is now an iconic representation of a fantasy scene and its evolution.



Artist: **Thomas Cole**  
Title: **The Course of Empire: The Savage State**  
Date: **1836**

Location/Owner: **New York Historical Society**

● By combining different landscapes like a forest, the sea and mountains with abstract elements like a very soft and surrealistic fog and intense lighting, Cole creates a world which couldn't be any more likeable or magical. The people are typical of the Native Americans that would have been depicted in frontier art of the time, but Cole has a surprise in store for his audience...



Artist: **Thomas Cole**  
Title: **The Course of Empire: Destruction**  
Date: **1836**  
Location/Owner: **New York Historical Society**

● Previous images show this scene evolve from a pastoral idyll into a classical city. In this image we see it pulled down. Statues are broken and buildings burned, and the civilisation collapses, ready for the final phase.



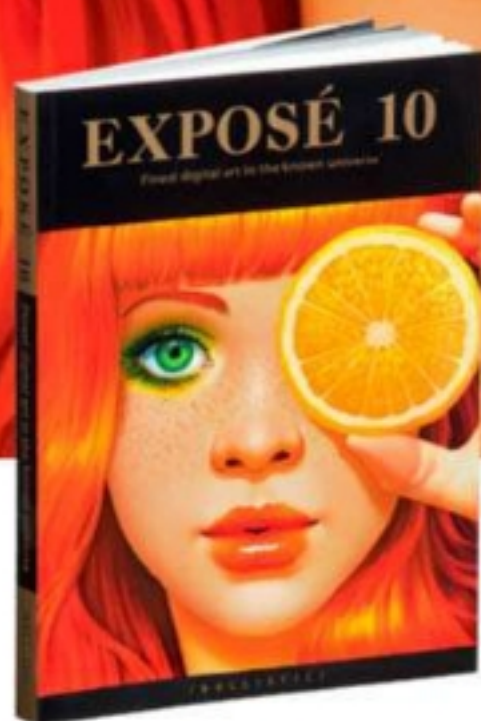
Artist: **Thomas Cole**  
Title: **The Course Of Empire: Desolation**  
Date: **1836**  
Location/Owner: **New York Historical Society**

● Finally, the great civilisation ends up desolate, abandoned, and forgotten; waiting for a future archaeologist to unearth it. Cole represents the final phase in a way that's reminiscent of real Greek ruins, provoking his audience to wonder at the nature of this imaginary civilisation.



# EXPOSÉ 10

Image courtesy: Daniela Uhlig, GERMANY Red Orange



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/ B A L L I S T I C /




# Fantasy Art Skills

Welcome to the Art Skills section where you'll learn quick ways to source, sketch and compose key fantasy elements

Let our experts help you with your creative queries

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 [fantasyartist@imagine-publishing.co.uk](mailto:fantasyartist@imagine-publishing.co.uk)



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# Anime-style landscapes

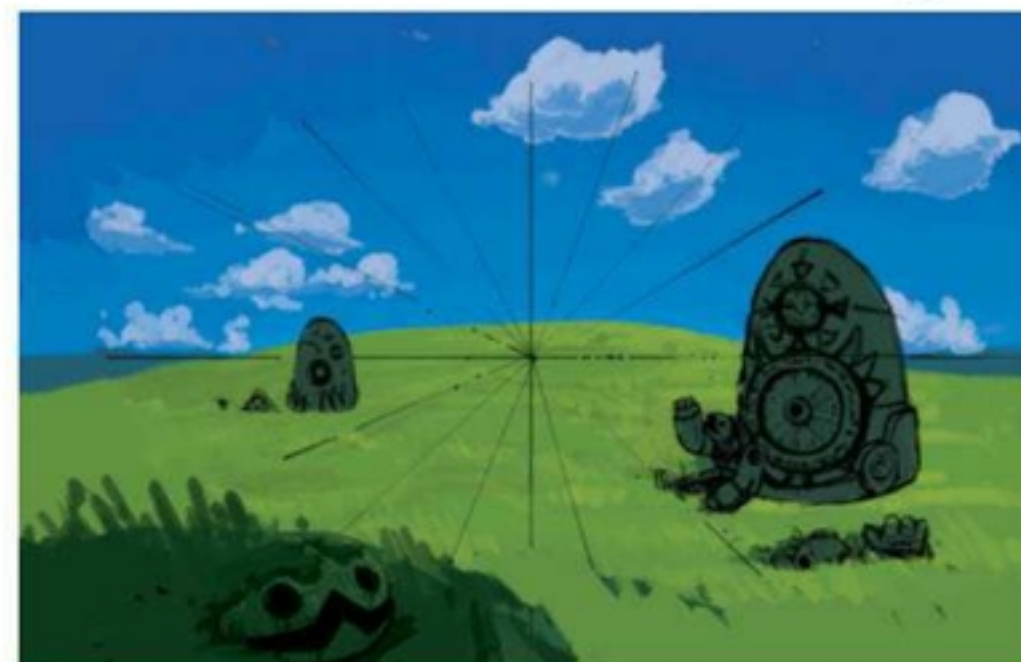
Discover how a wind effect gives an epic feel to landscape scenes

**To make your creations capture the viewer's imagination you need atmosphere.** Wind is a great way of reinforcing the vastness of an environment; open areas are often exposed to strong winds so you will be adding realism to your creation. Gusts of wind roll like waves across fields and behave like fluid as they crash against different objects.

If your environment is a stage then wind is only a supporting act, it needs flexible structures to come to life and it also needs the right conditions. You can't deploy wind in any environment; in many areas it is unlikely to occur and will simply confuse the image. Enclosed areas with no obvious wind channel might lead the viewer to think more about what's happening outside the boundaries of the image, so be careful about how its inclusion affects the readability of your environment.

Understanding where the wind is coming from, its direction and how fast it's travelling through your image is vital. On ground level in an open field wind will nearly always move in the same direction; it's also possible on a much larger scale that different weather fronts could meet, resulting in variations in wind direction. Your best tool for indicating wind is to show consistent alteration to the flexible forms in your image. Using motion blur on a few stray bits caught in a gust could help, however try not to rely solely on camera effects until the underlying structure already reads as a windy environment. Watch videos of wind in action; you'll need to understand the full motion cycle to capture one moment of it.

**01 Value and foundations** It's important to remember that wind is only a supporting act to the success of your image. It cannot be applied without fully understanding the form and structure of the environment that it moves across. Start by getting a solid foundation, introducing some basic values and asking yourself whether you associate the resulting atmosphere with wind.



**RORY DOONA**

Artist info



[www.sorasabi.com](http://www.sorasabi.com)

I'm a 26-year-old freelance digital artist working in London producing manga-influenced design and illustration. I do feel incredibly lucky to be able to make a living in such a competitive industry and I try to focus on improving my skills wherever possible.





## 02 Commit to the underlying structure

Things are going to get messy if you start introducing moving grass and plants too soon; amid all the chaos you could easily lose the subtle changes in colour and the structure underneath. Make sure these questions are already answered by committing to the light source and structures that you intend for the finished image.



## 03 Layer the wind on top

Painting all those wind-altered details is going to take a while so start a new layer on top in case you make any mistakes. Flip the layer off and on to check you aren't losing any of the structures underneath. Don't be afraid to use a bit of copy-and-paste if you have a lot of blades of grass to draw!





# Cute and creepy interior scenes

How to make a fantasy childrens' illustration scary but sweet

**Fantasy illustration is an art aiming to make people dream and discover new universes of the imagination.** This means it places great emphasis on environment, especially on giant sets that are very complex, like majestic temples, post-apocalyptic cities and endless landscapes. This type of set is used to strengthen the feeling of tiny characters lost in a striking immensity, full of mystery and things to discover. But little places are not to be neglected!

A lot of fantasy characters, particularly in fantasy for children, inhabit environments like magic shops, dark shacks, attics, old factories and the like. The most important element here is not the architecture but the objects that build the set: tools, decoration and weird little objects. Indeed, a small environment makes us focus on the atmosphere, and as it's an environment on a human scale, it's used to reveal a character's footprint in the set.

Don't be afraid to imagine little stories and to invent the life of the character when you create such a set. The more anecdotes you imagine about this environment, the more rich and unique your illustration will be. This way you'll create a truly unique illustration.

## HUGUETTE PIZZIC

Artist info



[huguettepizzic.com](http://huguettepizzic.com)

I'm a freaky illustrator and concept artist who is totally in love with cute critters and poetry. Zany monsters, a touch of joyful macabre all wrapped up in a pink and feminine atmosphere – that would be a pretty accurate summary of my creative work!

Treat your interior as an embodiment of the characters that inhabit it. Consider what story you want the space to tell and fill it accordingly

The various objects filling your scene are vital for balancing the tone, so choose carefully what you place and importantly, where!



## Set the scene

Develop a setting that tells a story, bringing a dark yet playful tone to your creations



### 01 Choose a place and character

The choice of setting is the most important thing. Select an environment that inspires you and think about the character living in it. For an illustration like this, it's not just a question of creating a pretty composition; you have to imagine a place with all the objects your character could use. Think about details: they are key to bringing your drawing to life.



### 02 Develop the sketch

Whether you sketch on paper or directly in Photoshop, you should think about the lighting early on. In an interior scene, the light is the key element in creating the atmosphere: for example, depending on the type of lighting, the same set can look frightening or pleasant. So, create black-and-white lighting on your sketch, before you start with colours.



# Fantasy Art Skills

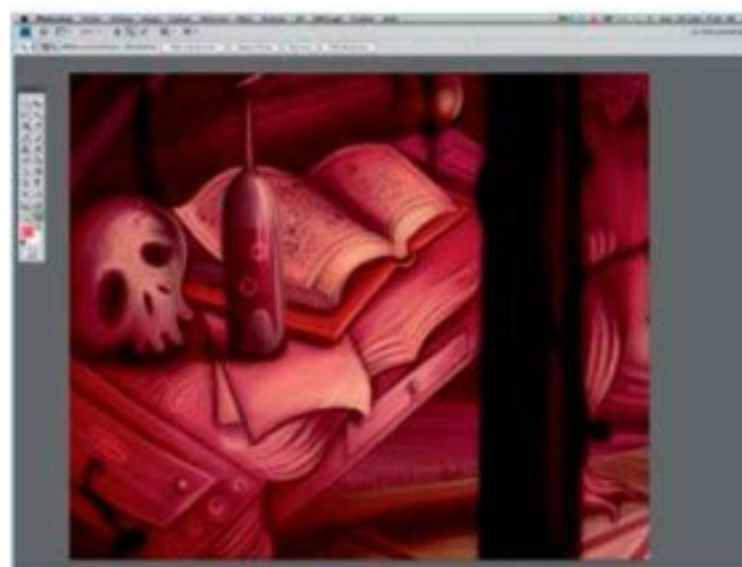


Light is an essential element of any interior scene. Here, a dark foreground helps to add more volume and create a real sense of depth



## 03 Begin colouring

Fill a new layer with one initial colour above the layout layer then set it to Multiply to create an overall atmosphere. Continue applying, while roughly placing all colour areas, to manage the atmosphere and the legibility of your picture. Don't hesitate to use a restrictive palette to enhance certain elements or details of your scene that you wish to enhance.



## 04 Add details

Details are very important for creating a powerful interior scene. You should enhance the textures (wood, textile, metal and so on) and the patina of time to make the scene credible: it's not often that a witch lives in a brand-new house! So, exaggerate cracks and scratches, irregular wood parquet and other tiny details.



## 05 Play with perspective

To create more volume, add very dark foregrounds. This will strengthen the impression of depth and make your picture more legible. Also, use blurs: blurred foregrounds re-create the natural depth of focus of the eye and make your picture look more realistic. Make colour adjustments to emphasise the important elements in your illustration.



# Guide to basic weapon and armour design

Learn how to paint a medieval-inspired scene featuring armour and weaponry

This tutorial will teach you how to go about painting a realistic fantasy scene, with emphasis on how to render armour and weapons in a convincing fashion. Before beginning the painting, it's always a good idea to do some research on the theme. In this case, reference photos of medieval weaponry and armour would come in handy.

The weapons shown here start with a Western-style arming sword (otherwise known as a knightly sword); a single-handed blade that would have been used with the iconic heater shield next to it in melee combat. The arming sword has a cruciform hilt and a long blade that tapers towards the tip. The heater shield has a shaped top and triangular bottom, used for defending the torso and groin area while providing freedom of movement and vision.

Next to the shield is a morning star; a heavy spiked club used from horseback and on foot. It's a spiked iron ball mounted on a shaft, combining a bludgeoning weight with many small blades. Beside the morning star is a single-bladed axe, with a spiked counterweight offsetting its blade.

Finally, we have a reflex bow, designed for use from horseback, and the arrows that accompany it. The reflex bow is a more interesting shape to draw than the regular longbow thanks to its curves, which also enable it to have a long range despite its small size. It's made of wood with a horsehair string. The wood-shafted arrows are tipped with heavy iron points to give them the power to punch through armour.

## GEORGE PATSOURAS

Artist info



[cgaddict.blogspot.com](http://cgaddict.blogspot.com)

I'm currently a full time freelance illustrator. I specialise in painting fantasy themes with a realistic style. I also do caricature and portrait work as well. Currently I'm working for several publishing houses and doing commissions on the side as well.



## Painting a fantasy armoury

Use colours to define skin tones and metallics



**01 Concept sketch** It's a good idea to handle this in two layers, one rough, and one to draw over for a cleaner look. Using a small, hard-edged brush with 25% opacity, quickly sketch out the scene. When you're satisfied, lower the layer opacity to 50% and refine it in a new layer. Spend time getting the weapon shapes correct from your references.



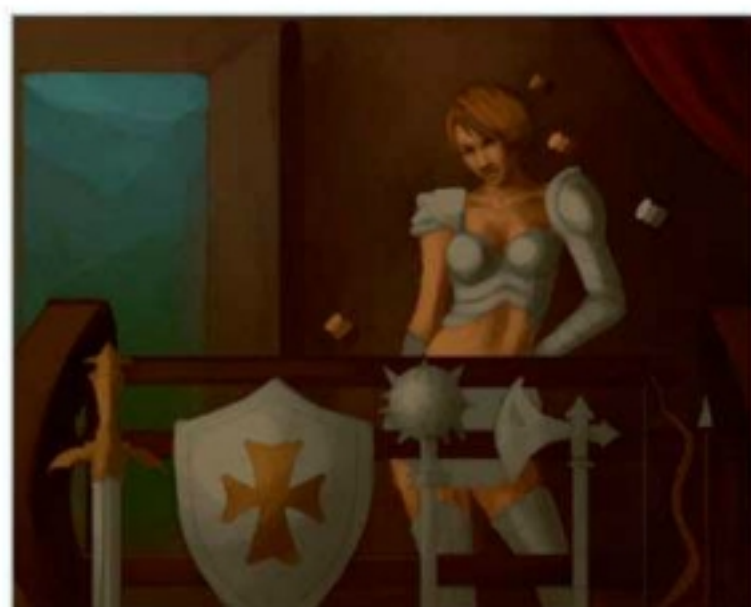
**02 Colour block-in** Choose a colour palette. In this case I'm using mostly orange tones, ranging from very dark red for the shadows to yellow for the light. I paint in the tones in compliance with the lighting, coming from the top left of the image. Focus on values and light at this stage, and keep colour variation low to avoid a muddy look.



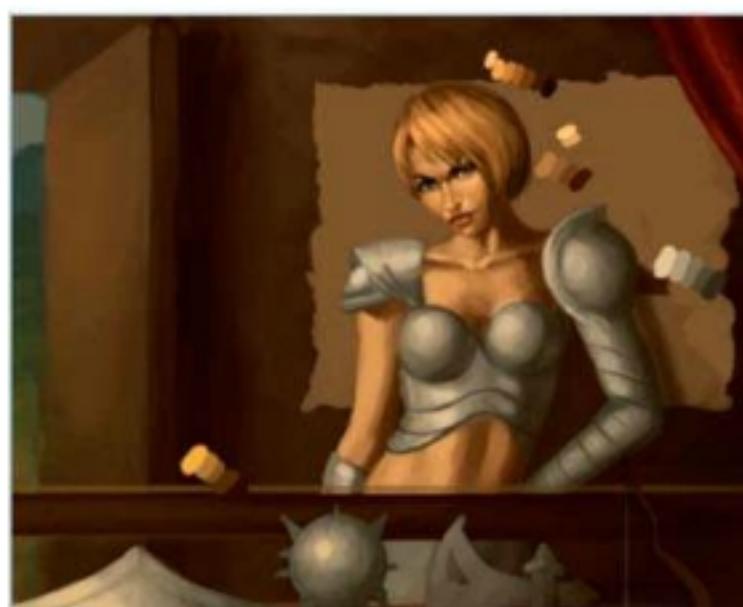
# Fantasy Art Skills



Fantasy weapons and armour are influenced by real artefacts from history. Take a look at how they work to make your fantasy ones more believable



**03 Define light and form** Emphasise the lighting to give the painting some form and definition. Take your time here, and shade everything in accordance with the light. Be bold with your highlights and shadows for the armour and weapons, as these elements require a strong value statement to give them a realistic appearance.



**04 Let there be light** Choose a very bright highlight colour for the skin tones. A very bright yellowish-pink tone would be ideal for the figure, with an almost pure white for the armour and weaponry. Don't be afraid to really push the light, as that will really help bring out the forms of each element and give everything a very believable look.



**05 Texture and refine** Once everything is nice and clean, introduce some texture work to the armour to give it an even more believable look. Using and mixing a variety of different brushes can lead to some interesting results, so don't be afraid to experiment. Use new layers to handle this step and merge only when you're satisfied with the outcome.



# Secrets of effective backgrounds

Use light, contrast and placement of background features to tell a story without words

**When creating an illustration to tell a story you have to use your arsenal of skills to build up a scene; the background isn't there just to complement the character.** The trick is using composition, lighting, contrast and the like to direct the viewer and give emphasis to critical points without making them blaringly obvious – you want to let the viewer take in the story at their own pace.

In this picture a little baby dragon is collecting stones and dipping them into a stream, making them shiny and pretending he has a hoard of precious gems. Filtered light is focused on the dragon and his rock pile, using local contrast from the grass to make the rocks stand out and draw the viewer's eye to this starting point. From there, little details are laid out to build up more of the story: a puddle of water under the rocks, wet footprints in the grass and bank from where he was picking up rocks, and more dry stones scattered around for him to find, to name a few. The wet stone in his hand helps bring it all together, linking the pile of wet stones to an action performed by the character. It's the small details that flesh out the scene and keep the viewer looking to find new ones. It's important to think about these small details when constructing your own scene, so you can strike a balance between comprehension and subtlety so the viewer thinks about what they see.

## Create a visual story

Use details to build up the tale behind the action



**01 Lay out the idea** When creating a scene it's important to consider, and establish early on, how the character, background, lighting, and details work together. Thumbnails and quick sketches help in trying different things to see what works best before committing. Using greyscale helps to figure out contrast and general lighting.

### ROBYN DRAYSON

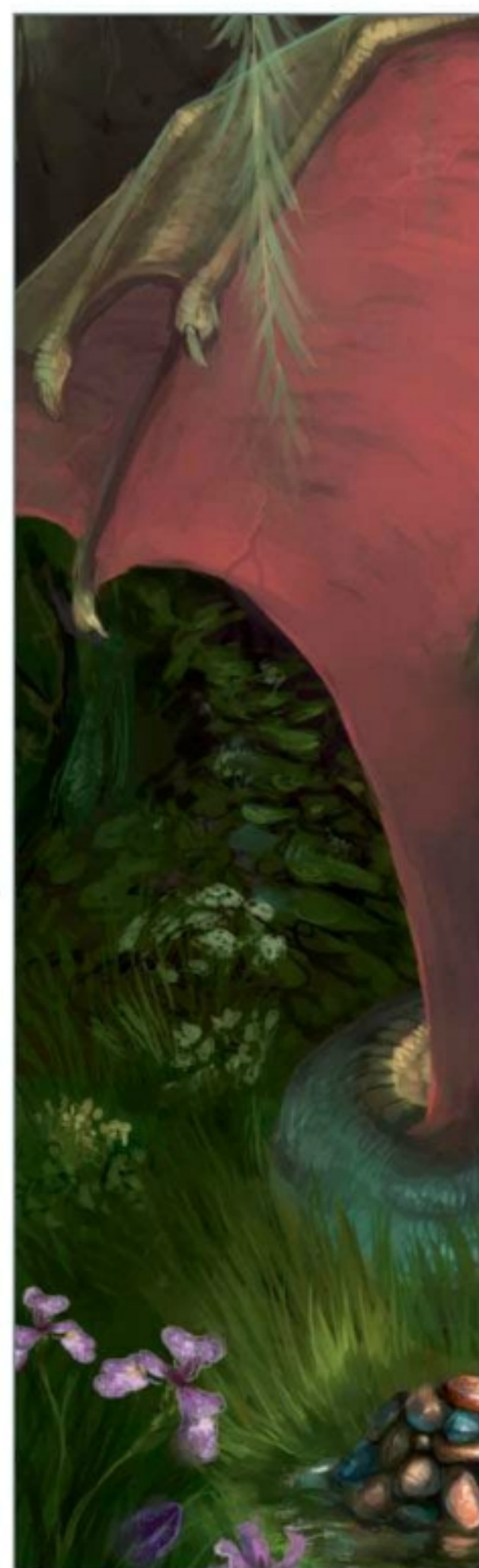
Artist info



[rajewel.deviantart.com](http://rajewel.deviantart.com)

Robyn Drayson is a 22-year-old self-taught artist who specialises in fantasy artwork. She's always loved the freedom, possibilities and magic of fantasy and enjoys the challenge and thrill of giving lifelike form to unreal subjects.

It's the background that actually tells us the story of what's happening here.



**02 Build up colours** Use a layer set to Overlay in order to add colour to your image. Using different hues will add interest to the painting and establish the overall light and shadow colours too. At this point there was a natural forest theme which was later altered so that it had a more fantastical quality.



# Fantasy Art Skills



## 03 Solidify colours and details

Using filters, the colours of the dragon and the background are changed to give the image a more fantastical feel and to create contrast. The pile of washed pebbles is moved into the foreground to better tell the story, while the background details are roughly blocked in.



## 04 Render the background

Keeping in mind the details, the background is rendered. Some additional features are added to the foreground in front of the character, as well as further back, in order to add depth to the scene. The light is focused around the dragon character to draw the viewer back to it.



## 05 Add the final touches

Using layer modes such as Addition and Multiply add final details and adjustments to the image. Here, sun rays are added to direct the viewer towards the character and to enhance the local light around him. Small bugs are added into the light for a natural sparkle effect to enhance the fantasy feel.



# Horse-based mythical beasts

## A short introduction to creating your own equine creatures of legend

There are a lot of different horse-based creatures that roam the fantasy universe. The most common in modern-day fantasy are the unicorn, kelpie, pegasus, centaur and hippogriff. These five are a great starting point for designing other fantasy horses; whether it's an evil kelpie or a guardian unicorn, there are horses to represent good, evil and everything in between. No knight is complete without a trusty steed to carry him into battle, so while you're at it, why not make something a little more interesting than just a normal horse? Maybe it's an eight-legged, devil-horned beast with the wings of a falcon, or a heavily armoured unicorn with the horns of an ibex?

Once you get started you'll realise that there's so much more to a horse than just four legs and a head, and how much fun you can have with designing your personal steed. Horses have been customised ever since the Romans started portraying them, so now it's your turn to give it a try. Remember, it takes a lot of practise to figure out the horse's anatomy, so don't give up if the first attempts end up far from what you imagined. If you feel like you're stuck, find some nice reference photos of horses, birds, bulls – anything really – and mesh them together until you find something you like. In other words, just have fun with it and use these five basic designs as stepping-stones to your own new creations.

### PEGASUS

Pegasus is a winged, white horse with golden hooves. It comes from ancient Greek mythology, where it symbolises wisdom and poetry. To make your own flying horse believable it's important to attach the wings to the horse properly. This can be done easily with some imagined wing muscles. Study the withers of horses and the muscle structure of heavy-bodied birds of prey for a good idea on how to create the shoulder-wing joints effectively. When sculpting out the muscles you can use a layer set to 30% Opacity with a shadow colour. The one used on this pegasus was a deep purple, which complements the white-gold hue. After creating a shadow layer you can use a soft brush and erase the colour where the light falls.



### KELPIE

The kelpie is an evil, black horse from Celtic myth, with white eyes and a dripping seaweed mane. It haunts streams and encourages the unwitting to approach and ride it. Once on its back you can't get off, and it drowns and eats you. Lovely! When creating a kelpie make sure to give it beautiful features – after all, it attracts its victims. As it's a carnivore you can add pointed teeth but try not to overdo it, if it looked too scary people wouldn't approach it. When painting a black horse, use a shade of grey as the base. If you use pure black the image will look flat because the shadows won't be visible.



### LOUISE MEIJER

Artist info



[roiuky.deviantart.com](http://roiuky.deviantart.com)

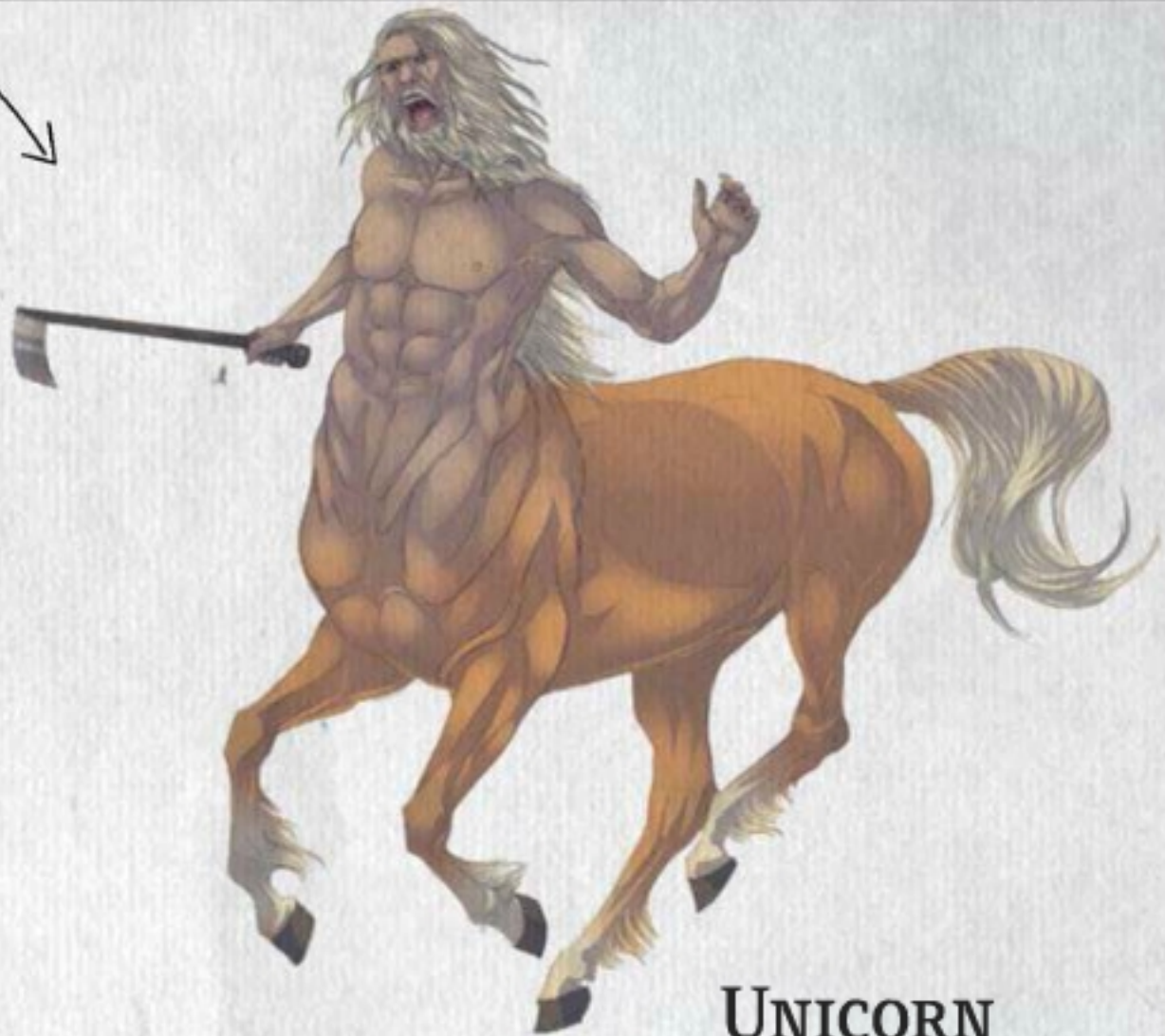
I am a student at the University of Skövde, in Sweden, studying on a game development programme. I've been drawing and painting as long as I can remember and recently switched to digital art, where I adapted the cel shading style I work in today.



# Fantasy Art Skills

## CENTAUR

A centaur is a creature with a human's upper body and a horse's legs. Found in Greek myth, they are best known for their fighting skills and ferocity, being as wild as untamed horses. However, they're also seen as wise astronomers and guardians of the forest (the centaur Chiron is attested as the tutor of heroes like Jason, Aeneas and Perseus). When creating your centaur you can make both types of characters. If you choose to go with a warrior type you can combine a strongly built human body with a heavy type of horse, like a Shire or Clydesdale. If you want a gentler or feminine character you can use a delicately boned Arabian as your base for the horse body.



## HIPPOGRIFF

In medieval literature the hippogriff is the symbol of impossibility and love. It has the head, claws (on its forelegs) and wings of an eagle and the body of a horse. The hippogriff is said to be fast, strong and intelligent, and is usually the pet of a wizard or the heraldic device of a knight. Like the centaur and pegasus, the main issue when making a beautiful hippogriff is merging the two different animals in a believable way. Make sure the claw-arms of the eagle aren't too short compared to the hind legs, and attach the wings properly to the body. After the anatomy is in order, go crazy with the feathers!



## UNICORN

The unicorn is a legendary white horse found in medieval tales, which has a magic, spiral horn projecting from its forehead. Originally it featured a goat's beard, cloven hooves and blue eyes that grow paler over time and these are still great additions that add to its flowing shape. It's a symbol of purity and grace, and traditionally in myth it can only be captured by a virgin. Since the horn is the only thing separating it from an ordinary horse, it's important to make it stand out in the picture, for example by using a side view. To draw more attention to the horn and emphasise that it's magic, you can give it an additional colour or glow, or why not design your own type of horn?





# Manga-inspired faerie art

Take a fresh look at illustrating faeries by incorporating a manga style

**People have a strongly established image of faeries.** You are already imagining a cute little blonde girl with butterfly wings, sitting on a mushroom. But like all imaginary creatures, they can be represented in almost any way you can think of.

Manga as a drawing style lends itself well to creating more edgy, contemporary faeries. Mix this with different concepts and you can create a unique faerie design. You've got an incredible range of possibilities – pirate faerie, steampunk faerie, sci-fi faerie, horror faerie; all of these become possibilities when you incorporate some basic manga techniques like facial stylisation into the image.

Think about proportions. Regular things will look different from a faerie perspective. Maybe you will get some cool ideas for your painting, like faeries holding a huge cell phone, or faeries photographing each other with an immense camera, jumping on the button to take the picture.

In this concept, faeries are strongly influenced by the human world. That is why I incorporated some modern clothes and accessories into their design. It makes them look modern and fun. These guys are definitely not cute faeries sitting on mushrooms, but fierce fighters; each one has his own original concept, weapon design, clothes and magic.

Use basic manga stylisation devices such as facial shapes and expressions to really capture the characters in your faerie designs. In this example, two faeries face off over a lock and key. As to where it leads, who knows?

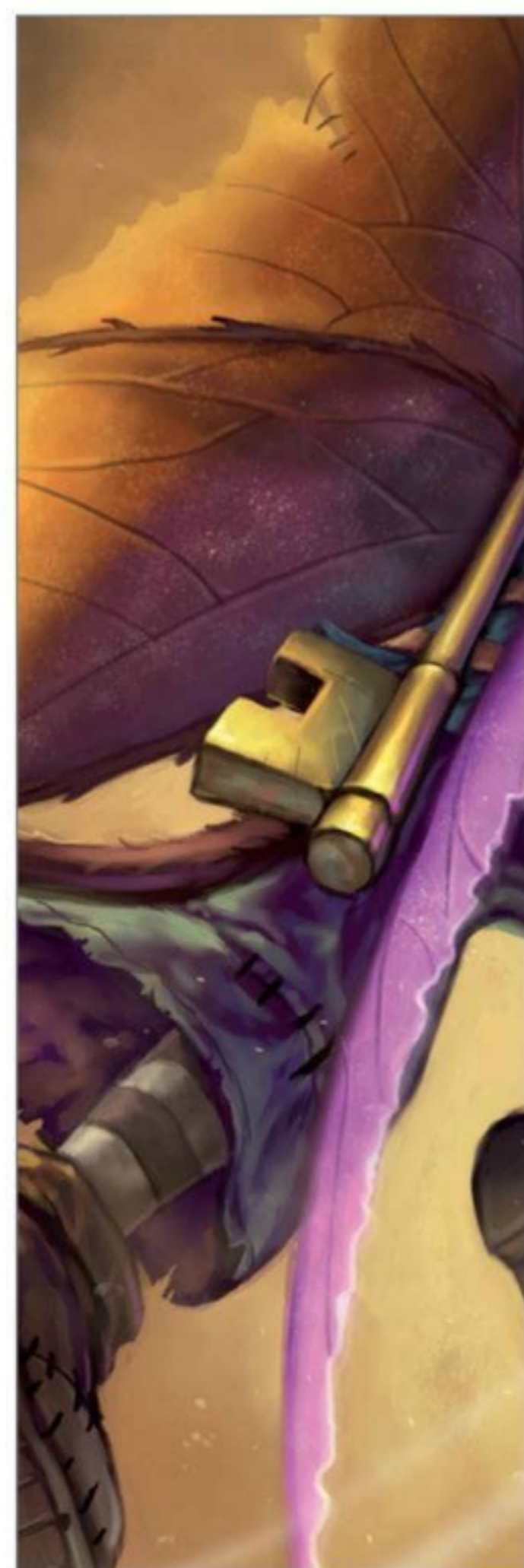
## NADIA ASSERZON

Artist info



[curlyhair.deviantart.com](http://curlyhair.deviantart.com)

As an artist I cover a wide range of styles and techniques. My motto is "In art as in a war – any means are good to achieve the desired result!" When painting I go with the crazy ideas that pop into my mind and bring them to life.



## Create your faeries

Build up a scene and characters in a manga style



**01 Model the spear** Even before sketching I've decided to model the weapon in Maya. When you're going to use a character more than once, you'd better make some preparations beforehand. Making some objects in 3D can save you a lot of time and effort; you won't have to deal with complex perspective and lighting problems.



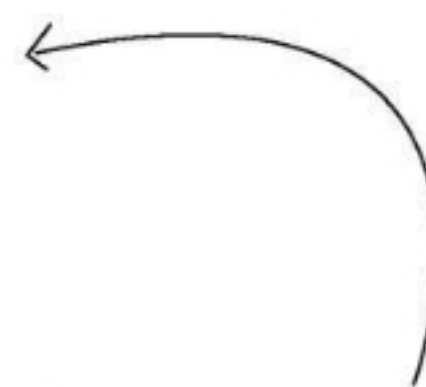
**02 Rough sketch** Don't be too accurate at this stage – just draw the initial idea. You can scan your paper sketch and work on it in Photoshop. Fix proportions and use the Transform and Liquify tools to move things around, crop and play with the composition. You can see that I've already used my 3D model to sketch the weapon.



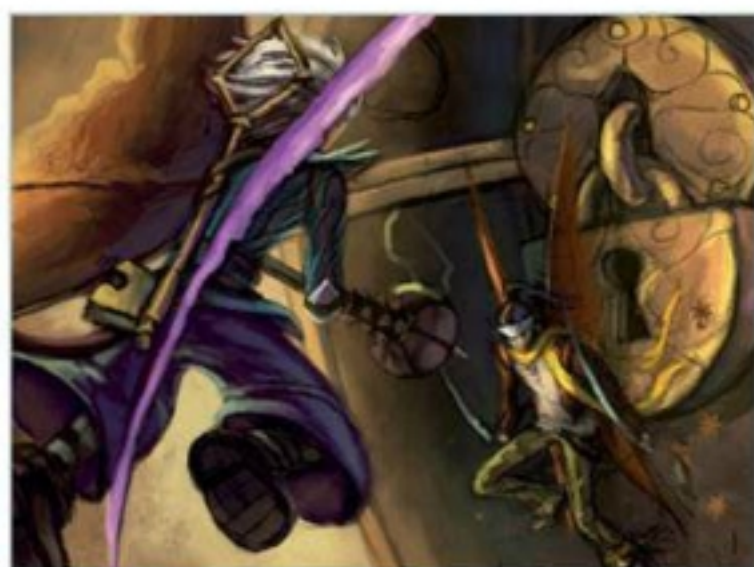
# Fantasy Art Skills



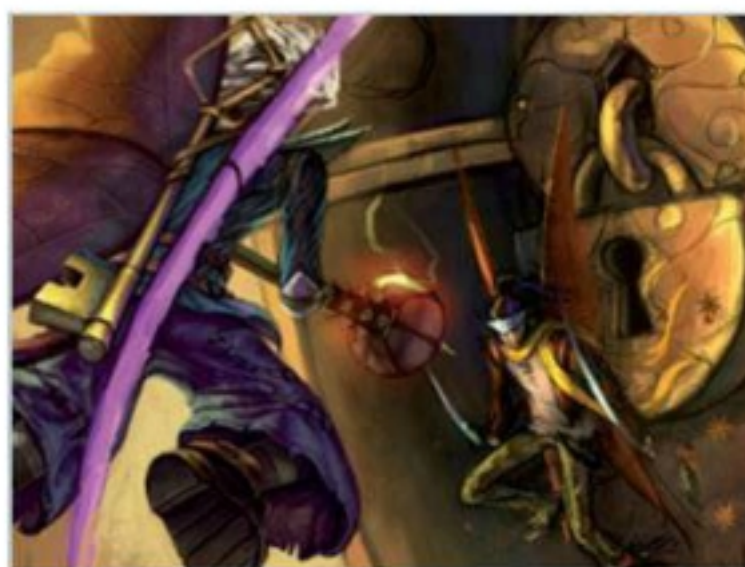
As faeries are so much smaller than humans, normal objects should appear dramatically larger in your scene



As always, try to tell a story with your scene. Here two faerie adversaries are poised for deadly combat



**03 Block in the colours** Set the sketch layer to Multiply and paint on the layer below. Block in the rough colours. Keep in mind the atmosphere you're trying to achieve. Don't be frustrated if it doesn't look fantastic at this stage. Use Image > Adjustments or adjustment layers to alter tones and colour schemes.



**04 Detail and refine** Here I jump between two programs – Photoshop and SAI. Photoshop has a wonderful package of effects, textures and brushes. SAI is lighter and better suited to painting, mixing and blending colours and it also possesses great anti-aliasing features. I always prefer painting in SAI.



**05 Add special effects** Now the work using SAI is done you can take it back to Photoshop and add some effects for atmosphere. Give it some practical features to really bring a sense of energy: blur the wings (as if they're in motion), throw in some particles, dust or even add fog and magical effects.



# Fairytale figures

## Some useful tips to achieve the right poses for your fairytale characters

In this guide you will learn how to draw and pose the characters that are most prevalent in fairytales. In almost all of the fairytales we see at the movies or read in books, you can find many recurring themes and archetypes, such as the beautiful princess in peril and the heroic prince ready to rescue her, struggling against the wiles of the wicked witch or the aggression of the terrifying monster. These will be the basic stock characters that we'll use in this tutorial: the princess, the prince, the witch and the orc.

These figures can be easily recognised thanks to their physical characteristics, clothing and some specific details. For example, the princess stands out thanks to her beauty, long and elegant dress and the crown she wears. A prince must have a proud and regal demeanour, and perhaps wear a long mantle, use a glittering sword and ride a noble steed. Conversely, a witch stands out for her fascinating and treacherous look, dark, worn-out clothing and her habit of riding on a broom. Finally, we recognise an orc by its size and menacing appearance.

These details will be very useful for developing your characters, because they will allow you to give them personality and a specific role in your fairytale.

## The hero

### Define your leading character

The posture, muscle structure and details of a character tell us clearly which position he/she/it occupies in a fairytale, and the more details you add, the more evident the personality of your character. The hero of fairytales, who is nearly always a prince, has a regal appearance thanks to the crown, the elegant clothes he wears, his bright weapons and the noble steed that always accompanies him. His muscle structure is toned but not too intimidating, and he is tall, with long legs and broad shoulders.

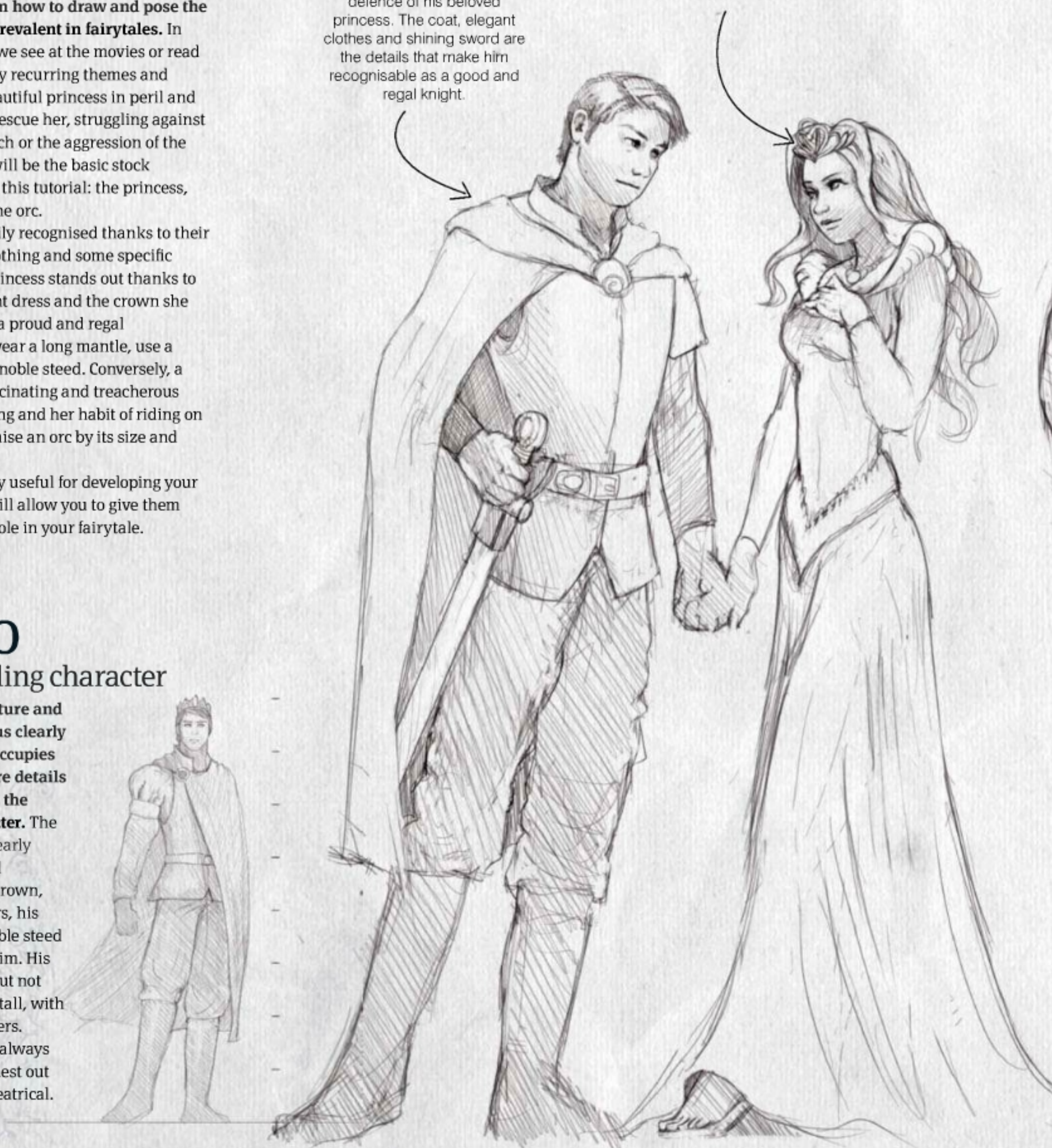
As for the pose, the hero always has a proud demeanour; chest out in a plastic pose, almost theatrical.

### THE HEROIC PRINCE

Here is our handsome prince, the champion of justice who will fight against evil in defence of his beloved princess. The coat, elegant clothes and shining sword are the details that make him recognisable as a good and regal knight.

### THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS

The crown, beauty and her elegant clothes leave no doubt that this is the princess we find in all fairytales, holding the hand of her beloved prince and hero.





# Fantasy Art Skills

## GIUSEPPE DI GIROLAMO

Artist info



[www.peppeti.blogspot.it](http://www.peppeti.blogspot.it)

I'm a freelance illustrator, character designer, artist and musician. I live in Palermo and study development graphics at the Academy of Fine Arts. I also belong to a gaming design team.

### THE ORC

This menacing creature is obviously an evil character in our story. He is big, muscular, and scarred, his face unmistakably evil.

### THE WICKED WITCH

This character is immediately identifiable as the antagonist of the story. The wicked witch stands out for her evil look that clearly shows she is plotting something. She wears dark clothing like all the wicked witches that can be found in fairytales.

### TOIL AND TROUBLE

The wicked witch is busy creating a potion she will use for evil purposes – to send the princess into a magical sleep or summon up an orc from his demonic realm, perhaps.





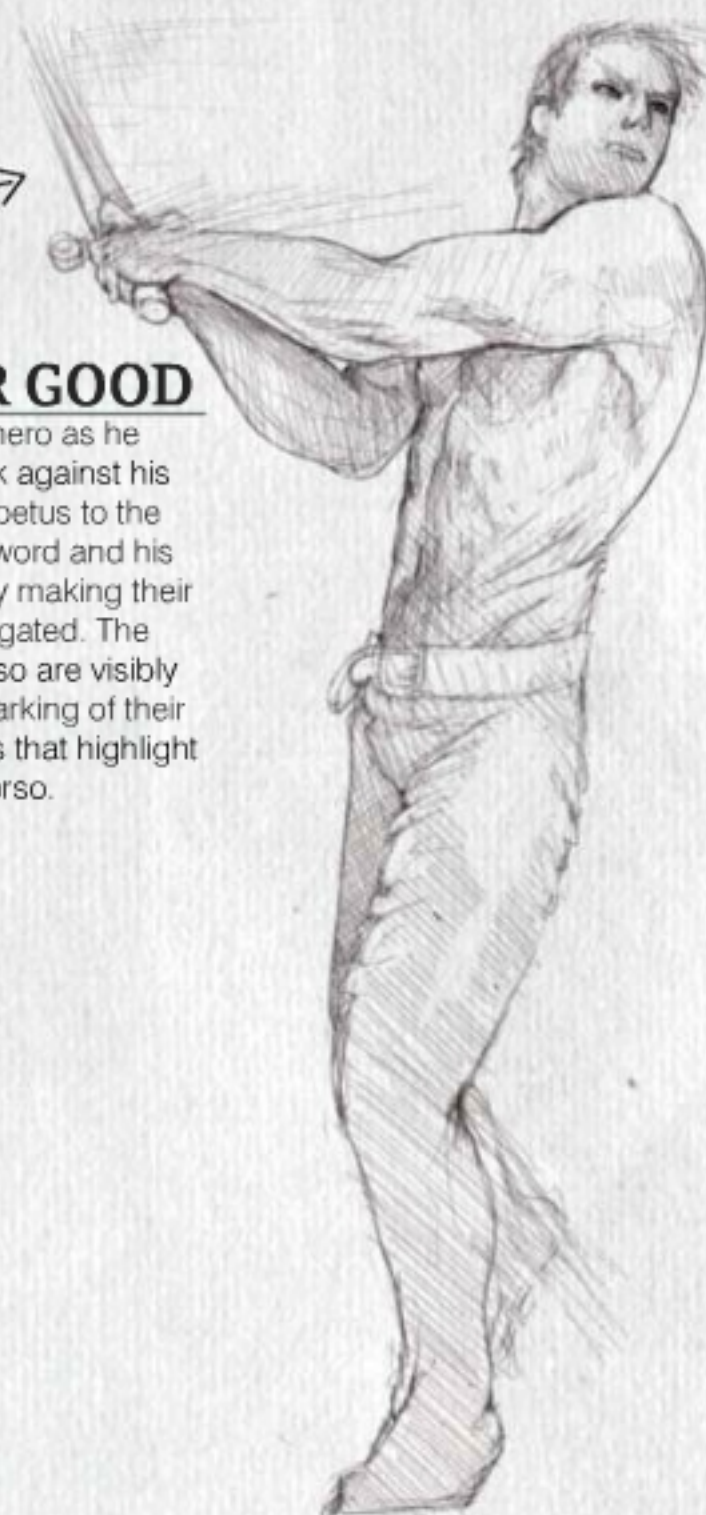
# How to pose your characters

The classic poses and actions we normally find in the scenes of a typical fairytale

Here are a few simple sketches made in Sketchbook Pro that depict our classic characters in some of the well-known poses and actions you often find in a fairytale. These actions identify each character and make their role and features easily identifiable. They are: the sleeping princess, the witch flying on a broomstick, the witch casting a spell, the hero riding his horse, the hero sword-fighting and the attacking monster.

## FIGHTING FOR GOOD

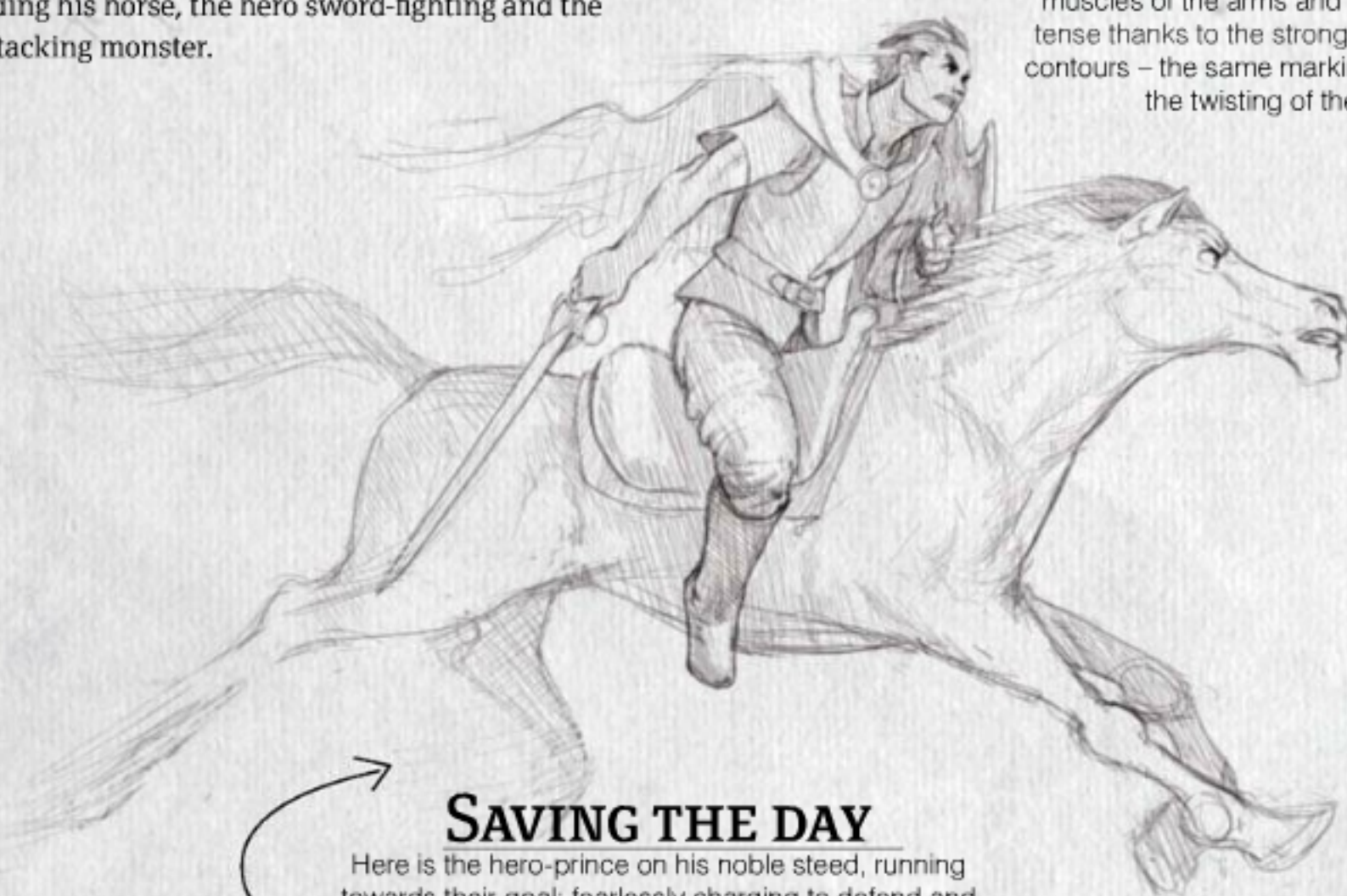
This drawing depicts the hero as he launches into a sword attack against his opponent. To give more impetus to the action, make sure that the sword and his foot appear to be in motion by making their edges undefined and elongated. The muscles of the arms and torso are visibly tense thanks to the strong marking of their contours – the same markings that highlight the twisting of the torso.



## SAVING THE DAY

Here is the hero-prince on his noble steed, running towards their goal; fearlessly charging to defend and save the beloved princess.

To give a sense of the horse's movement and high speed, draw vague and elongated legs and tail. The prince's fierce look is focused on his goal; his sword and shield ready for battle. Some of his contours are also indefinite to give a feeling of movement.



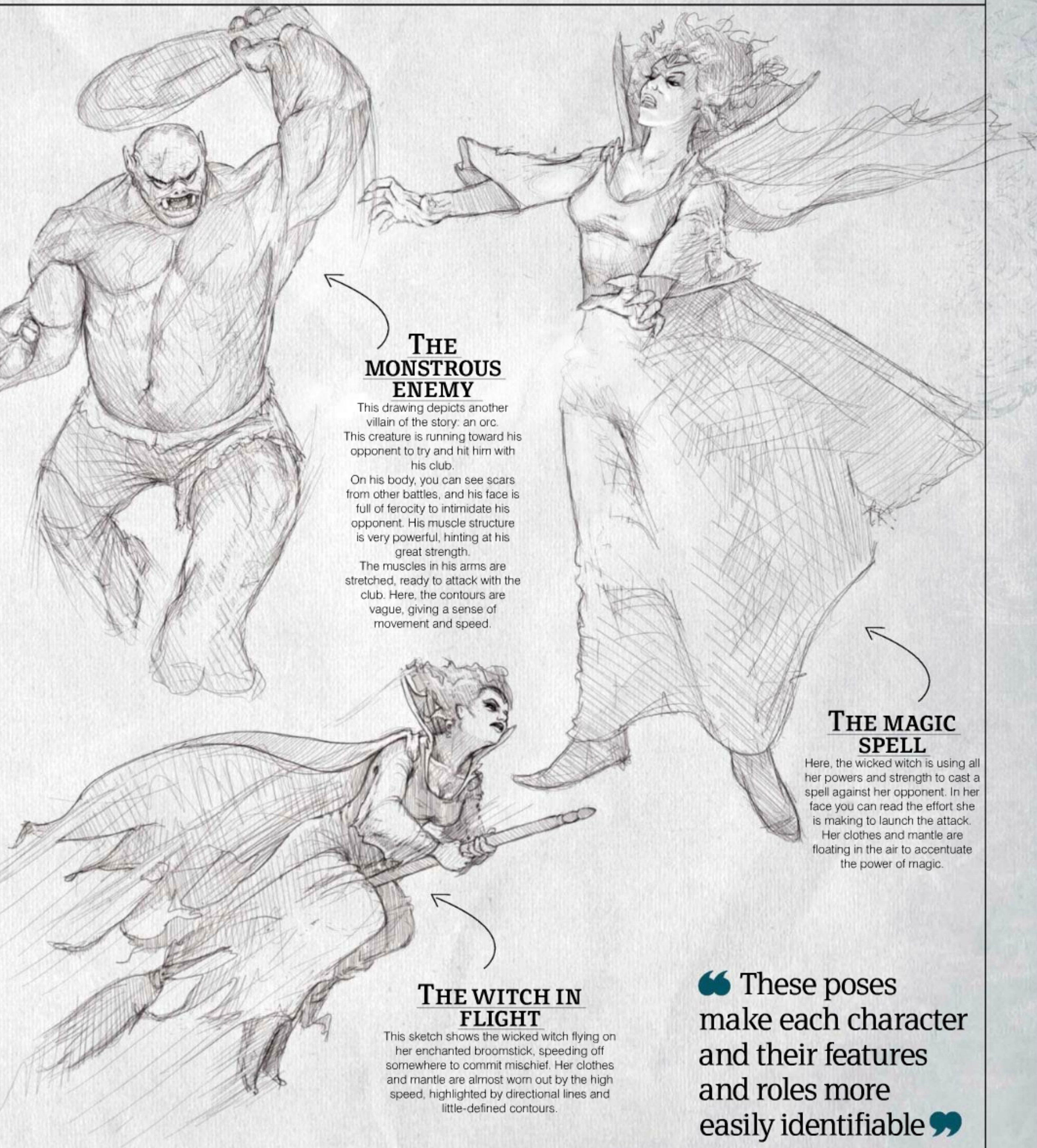
## THE POISONED FRUIT

To represent the sleeping princess, two fairytale clichés have been utilised: the beautiful princess asleep in her bed and the poisoned fruit offered by the wicked witch. The princess is represented here lying on a bed in a state of deep slumber, one arm fallen to the side where the poisoned fruit she just bitten has also fallen. Her crown has tumbled onto the floor, but we all know that the kiss of her true love will awaken her.





# Fantasy Art Skills



## **THE MONSTROUS ENEMY**

This drawing depicts another villain of the story: an orc. This creature is running toward his opponent to try and hit him with his club.

On his body, you can see scars from other battles, and his face is full of ferocity to intimidate his opponent. His muscle structure is very powerful, hinting at his great strength.

The muscles in his arms are stretched, ready to attack with the club. Here, the contours are vague, giving a sense of movement and speed.

## **THE MAGIC SPELL**

Here, the wicked witch is using all her powers and strength to cast a spell against her opponent. In her face you can read the effort she is making to launch the attack.

Her clothes and mantle are floating in the air to accentuate the power of magic.

## **THE WITCH IN FLIGHT**

This sketch shows the wicked witch flying on her enchanted broomstick, speeding off somewhere to commit mischief. Her clothes and mantle are almost worn out by the high speed, highlighted by directional lines and little-defined contours.

“ These poses make each character and their features and roles more easily identifiable ”



# Evolution of an image

Marcial walks us through his painting of Norse myth

## Marcial P Niebres Jr

Artist info



bustercloud.deviantart.com  
Software used Photoshop, Painter, PaintTool SAI

I was into drawing and sketching anime and manga characters until college. Inspired by fantasy RPGs and barely knowledgeable about digital colouring, I met some friends who introduced me to digital art. My style matured, and so I started painting digitally.



## About Ragnarok

This is my favourite event in Norse mythology: Ragnarok, an event foretold for the future in which many of the most well-known Norse gods fight and are killed, and the world is reborn. I know it's really mainstream to paint Thor at the moment and in the real myth this is actually Odin's battle, but I just put in my favourite gods: Thor, Heimdall and Vidar (Odin's giant son), and of course they're fighting against Loki and some giants. Hammer time!

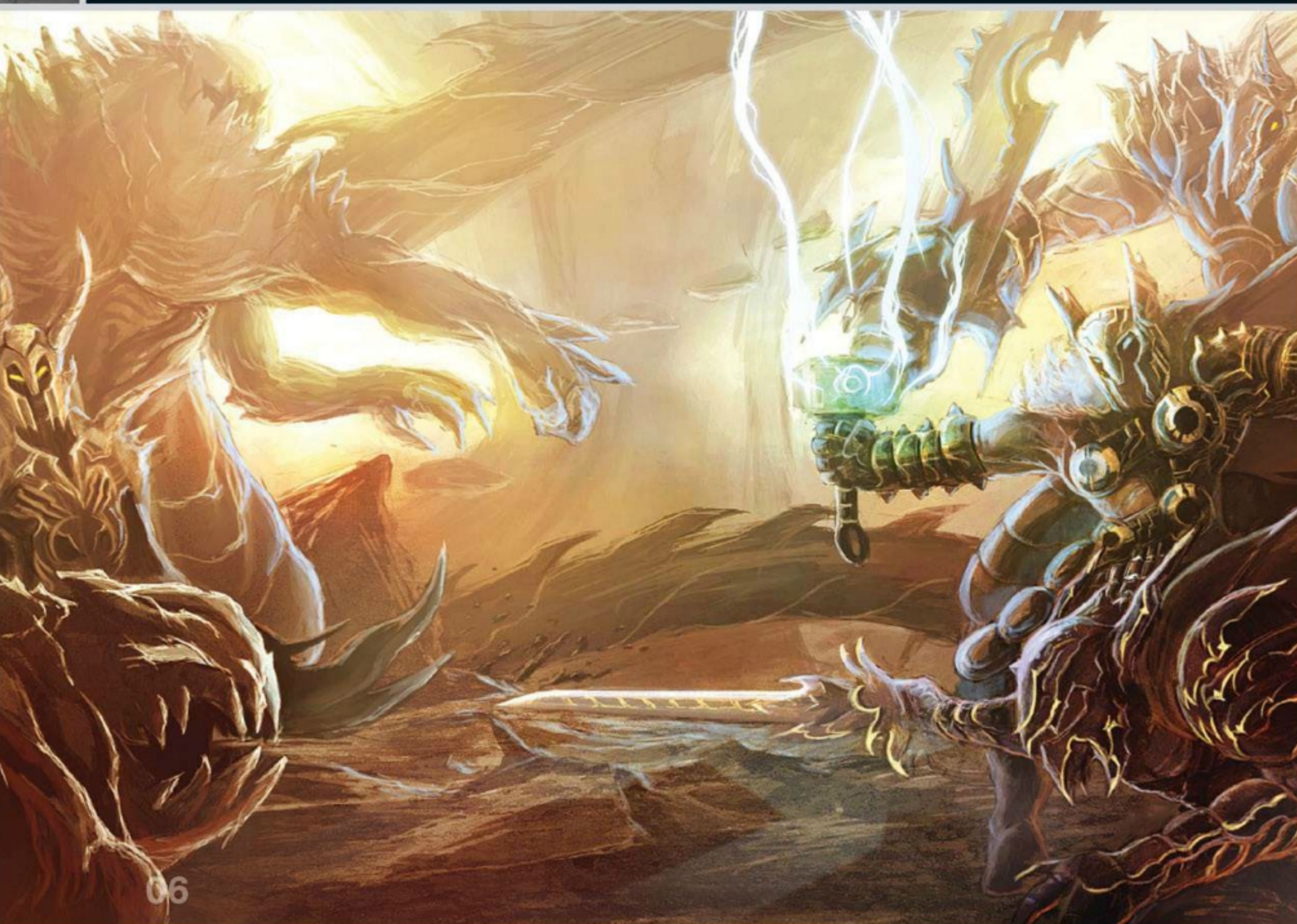
### 01

I really love Norse mythology and wanted to paint my favourite characters: Thor, Heimdall and Vidar. I started sketching at (h)1320 px by (w)2400 px at 72 dpi. Actually it could have been any size to start with; it doesn't matter as long the orientation is in landscape, which means the width size should be more than the height. The sketch is then set to Multiply.





“ I really love Norse mythology and wanted to paint my favourite characters: Thor, Heimdall and Vidar ”



## 02

After the rough sketch, I started with the greyscale values. I created a grey-coloured layer underneath the sketch, and started painting the background with soft and hard brushes. I also used my custom brushes. Here I'm building up the lights and darks to get the overall look and feel of the lighting in the image, getting the shading right before I start to apply colour.

## 03

I created another layer on top of the sketch layer and started to paint the characters. I'm still working purely in greyscale at this point but now I'm refining the basic values and developing the modelling of the characters, based on the lighting I've laid down and the shapes in the sketch. I just continue working up armour and details until I get the desired output.

## 04

Once the greyscaling was finished, I backed up the original layers by putting them into Groups, then duplicated those groups, and then merged the duplicated layers. I then started to add some colour by hitting Ctrl (or Cmd) +U, clicking the Colorize checkbox and then moving the Hue sliders towards oranges and yellows to achieve a warm brown tone.

## 05

On the coloured layer I use a soft brush and set the brush mode to Overlay and Color Dodge to paint in lighting. Overlay is good for the shadows while Color Dodge is good for highlights and stronger areas of saturation and lighter values. For the rendering I also used my custom brushes, set the brush mode to Overlay and Soft Light and ranged the Opacity from 20-60%.

## 06

To add details to the characters I also add red, blue, and green layers, changing their blend modes to Soft Light, to intensify and enrich the colours and add details. Once I've finished I back it up once more, duplicate again and then merge the duplicated Group and run Levels, Color Balance and Curves adjustments, and last I apply the Sharpen filter to sharpen the image.





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“Whenever my workload drops off, I always try to make sure that I’m working on and putting out new portfolio pieces”

● Honeycomb (below), 2010  
Photoshop This one is a personal piece that I sold as prints at San Diego Comic-Con in 2010



...ing time I can spend using it more often in Photoshop. Once I have the basic colour scheme mapped out, I start in on the actual painting. I try to stagger my projects so that while I’m waiting for feedback from one client, I can be working on something for another client and there is no dead time spent waiting. Sometimes, it can take a while to get feedback or approval, so it’s important that I use that downtime to catch up on other projects. If I don’t have other projects then I get to work on a piece for myself. Whenever my workload drops off, I always try to make sure that I’m working on and putting out new portfolio pieces to help attract new clients.

Each of your images implies a storyline happening beyond the moment that you’ve captured. Do you plan out this story beforehand or do you prefer to spark the viewer’s imagination and let them create a backstory for a piece?

Sometimes, the storyline is the main reason that I wanted to create the image and I have it planned out beforehand. Other times, the story doesn’t come to me until I’m a ways into the piece and something finally clicks. I don’t usually fill an entire backstory, though, as long as I can make the narrative of the image work on its own. My illustrations hint at stories but don’t have fleshed out narratives attached to



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won one of the most prestigious awards in  
y illustration, a Chesley Award; this year  
been nominated for the big one, a World  
y Award. How does that make you feel? Did  
agine when you first started out that you  
achieve this?

an't quite wrap my head around it. In my  
I'm still at least five years away from being at  
nt in my career that warrants any  
ations. It doesn't feel right that I'm receiving  
nd of recognition when I'm not nearly on the  
vel as a lot of my favourite artists. I'm  
bly honoured and humbled, but honestly I'm  
things die down for a little bit to give me a  
to improve my work enough to the point that  
lly deserve these honours!

y, what are your plans for the future?  
ns are relatively vague. If I had the money, I'd  
take some time off to go back and train more  
vely to help me improve my portraiture and  
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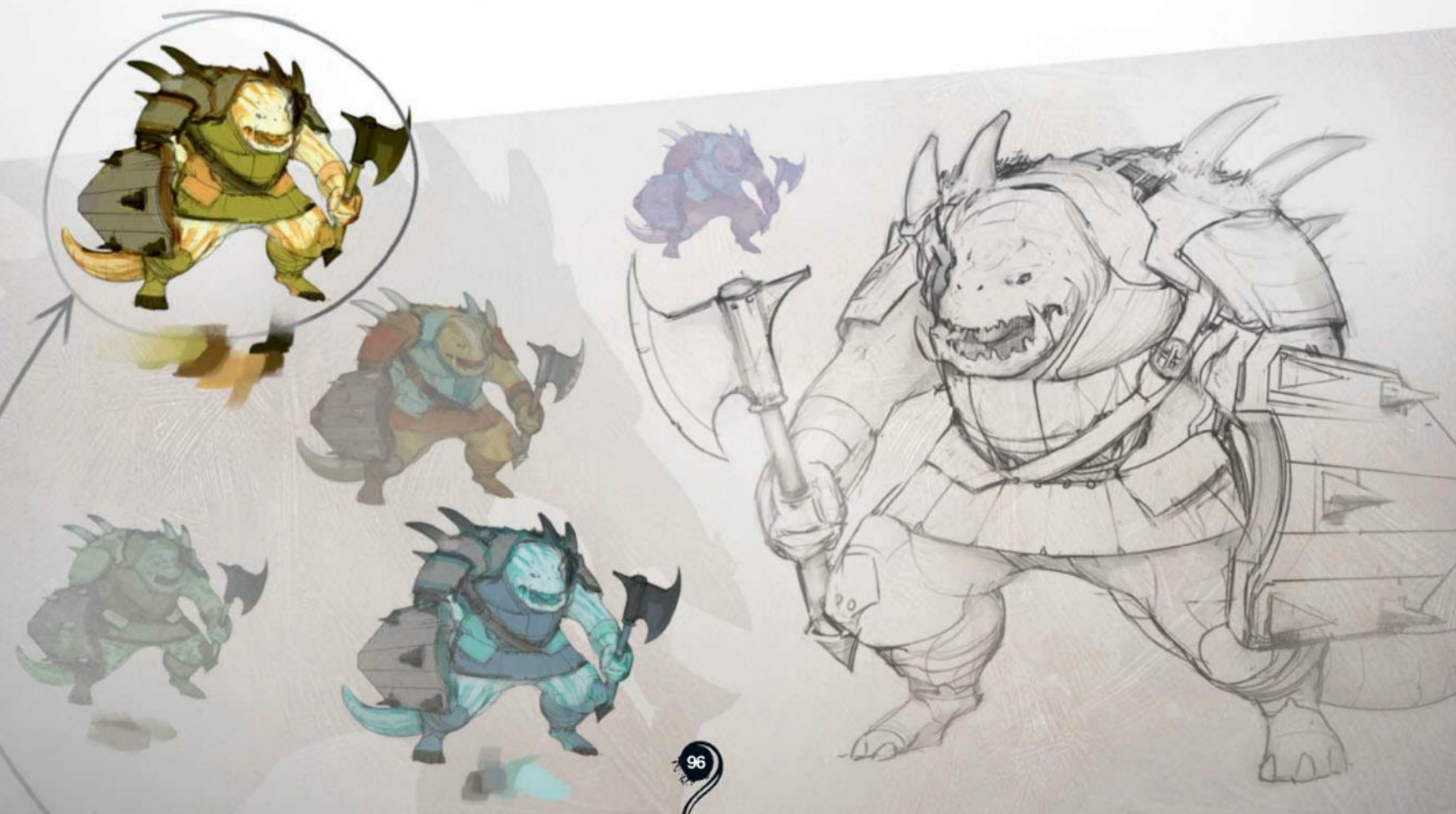
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Behind the scenes of your free video tutorial

# Secrets of concept art



**Ctrl+Paint**, a free beginner's resource for digital painting, explores the unsung hero of concept art: iteration

Lizardman

*Photoshop*

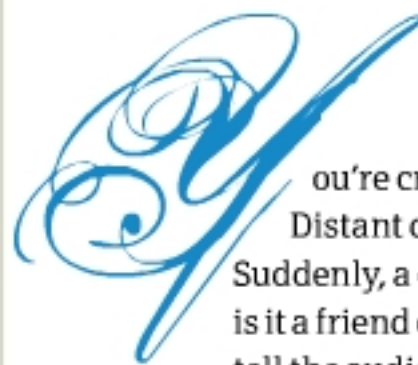
## CTRL+PAINT

Artist info



[www.ctrlpaint.com](http://www.ctrlpaint.com)

Ctrl+Paint teaches the basics of digital painting for free and without ads. Aimed at beginners, the five-minute videos break down complex topics into manageable tasks. If you've been thinking about it, then start painting digitally today!



You're crouching in a dungeon, axe in hand. Distant dripping sounds break the chilly silence. Suddenly, a creature emerges from the darkness – but is it a friend or a foe? As a concept artist, it's your job to tell the audience everything they need to know in that crucial first glance. The real secret of concept art is not simply making 'cool paintings'; it's about communicating with your audience. Armed with colours, materials and shapes, you're steeping your character in context and meaning. Moreover, as any professional artist will tell you, these designs never nail it on the first try. Good design requires iteration.

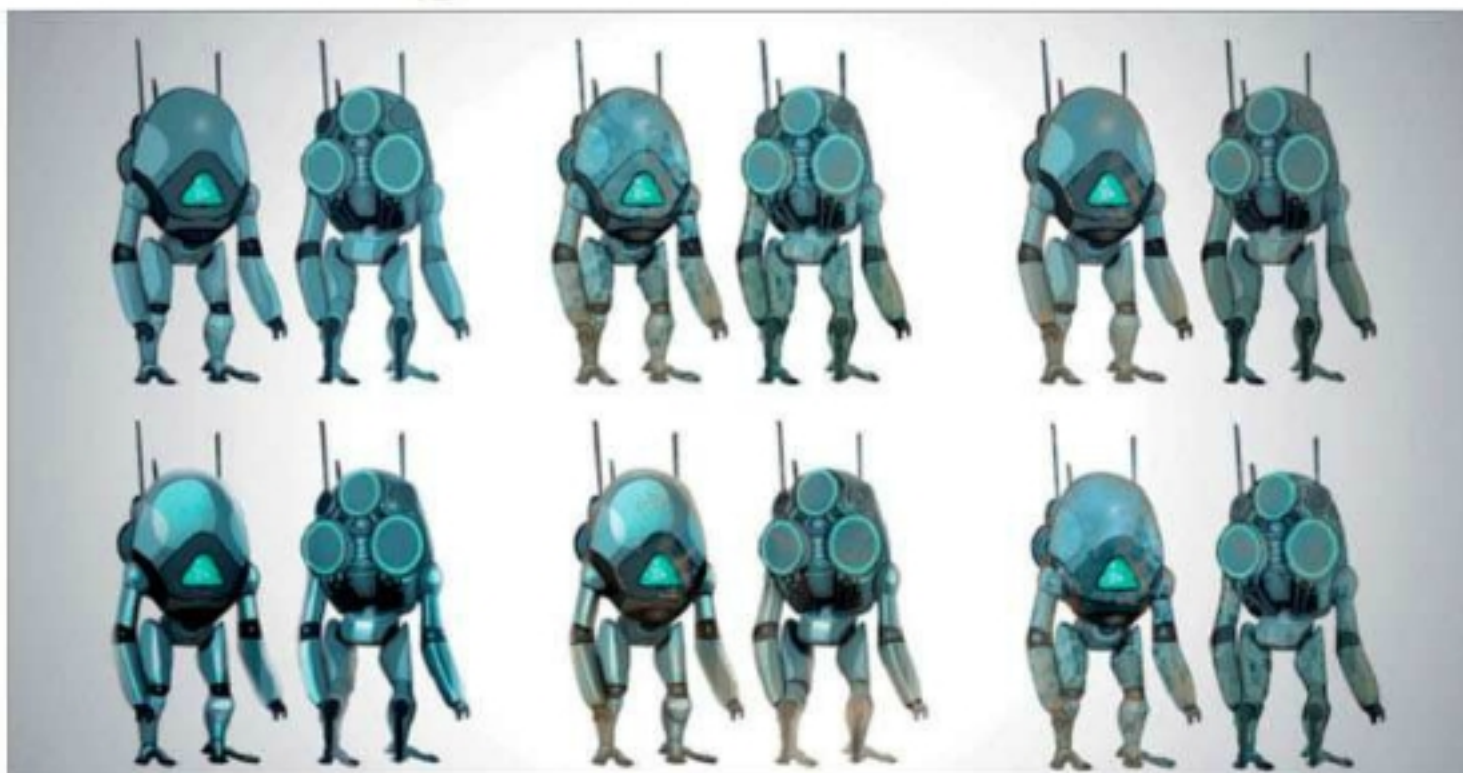
Any design can be considered in three parts: the sketch, the iteration and the final rendering. This tutorial dives into the iteration phase, where all of the

The first step in preparing your canvas is to isolate the character from the background. You can't beat the Pen Tool's precision for this task



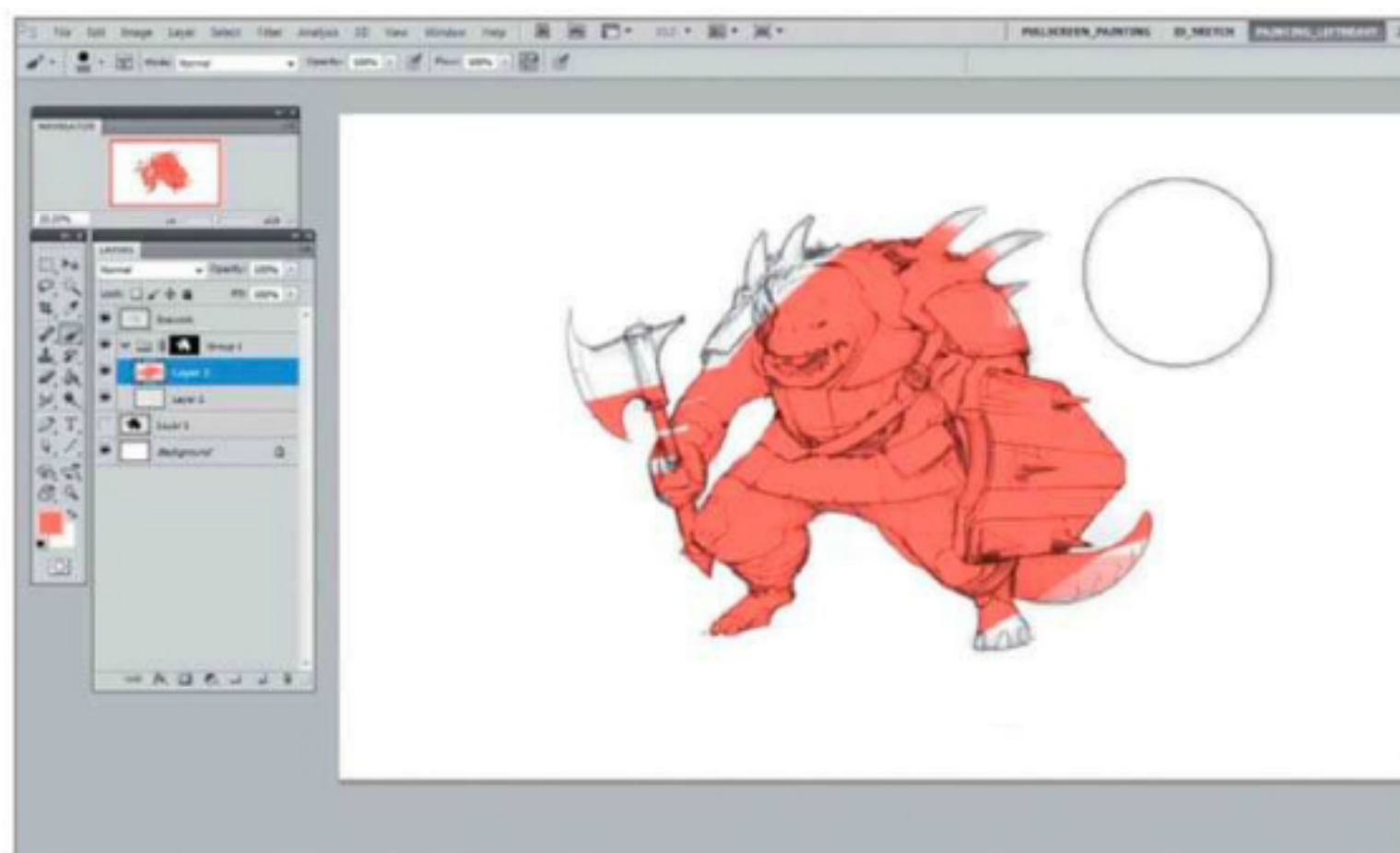
hard decisions are made. It's messy, dynamic and exciting – ultimately ending with a visual solution to your design challenge. You'll need a thick skin for this phase because 15 versions will be thrown away for each one you keep. Even though these sketches don't see the light of day, they're the unsung heroes of the concept art process. In fact, it's subjects like these that I like to explore the most on **ctrlpaint.com**. While many tutorials stick to the instant gratification of a glossy final product, the only real way to improve is with a strong artistic foundation. Iteration may not be sexy but it will absolutely improve your artwork.

When you're creating ten images and throwing away nine, working quickly is important. Photoshop is especially useful for this task and knowing how to set up your document correctly can save hours of repetitive work. For our Lizardman character design, the primary time savings will come from staying inside the lines. We'll be defining the character's outline with a mask – permanently preserving the white of the background. Using Bezier handles to carefully plot out his shape, we can capture both the smooth curves and the hard angles. Once the path is closed it's simply a matter of converting it into a



Designing for videogames is a team effort and providing variations is an essential tool for collaboration. Art directors love options, so give them something to choose!





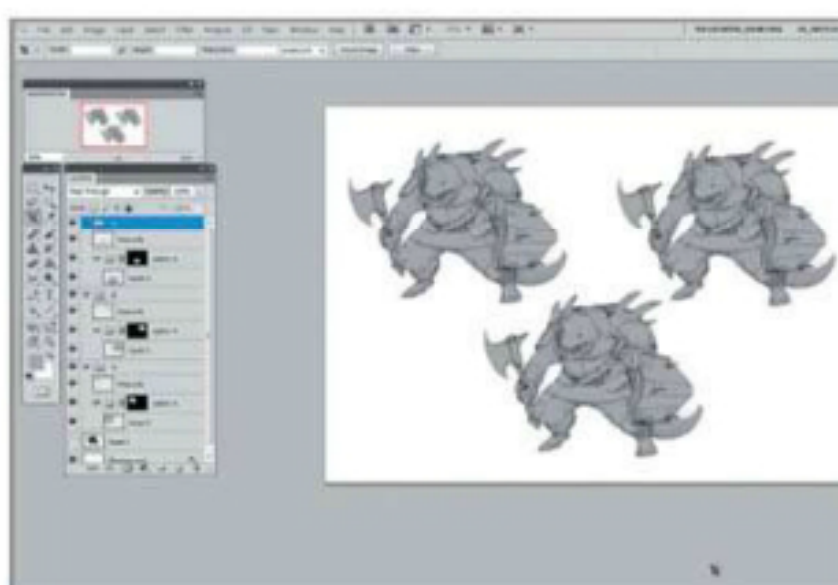
Once you've converted the selection to a mask, painting inside the lines is a snap. For organisation, the lines and colours are all stored in a single layer group

selection, creating a layer group and then applying the selection as a mask. Voila! Now we can paint with large, confident strokes, knowing that we'll always be painting inside the lines.

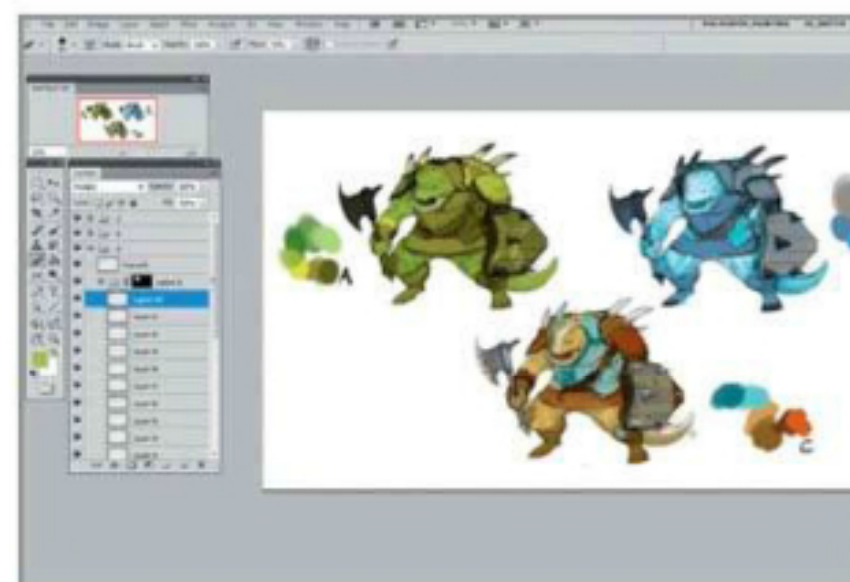
With all of the technical set-up out of the way, the fun part is about to begin. Keep the screen zoomed out far enough for you to see all of your variations at once. This forces you to think big and helps you to avoid working on tiny details. At this point, the goal is to generate a wide variety of ideas as quickly as possible. The process starts out wide and rough, but gradually focuses on the details.

You'll notice that we're working from a small colour palette for each variation. These pre-mixed colours are a great way to quickly lay out a colour scheme and speed up the entire painting process. When you're actually painting the character, it's easy to make boring colour choices as the rendering process and the character distract you. These small

Finally, the iteration is complete, and a single variation survives. Even though they are saved at a lower resolution, the flattened colour layers are transferred to the final canvas for polish



Even though it takes some time to prepare the initial mask and folder structure, the character can now be cloned to your heart's content!



Staying zoomed out and using large brush strokes with a properly prepared canvas, it doesn't take long to finish the first three colour schemes

zoomed-out thumbnails force you to think purely in terms of visual impact instead.

Once three variations are completed, it's time to let Photoshop do some of the heavy lifting. Duplicating each of these completed Lizardmen allows us to use Photoshop commands like Hue/Saturation, Photo Filter, Levels and Variations to make some rapid alternatives. This is another one of those dirty secrets of professional artists; there's no cheating. Painting the next three by hand is functionally no different to generating them with Photoshop trickery. None of these are beautiful paintings – they are just stepping-stones taking us to the final solution. After all, we're going to throw most of these variations away!

With a nice spread of choices, the brown and khaki-based desert colour scheme seems the most exciting for our Lizardman character. This means that Desert Lizardman makes the cut and progresses to the next phase of iteration: fine tuning. On a new canvas, we'll experiment with small scale changes. Keeping all three iterations on-screen, we're able to compare and judge what is working and what isn't. Trim on the armour? White horns? With the big questions answered, we're now able to consider the more granular details. Finally, happy with the results, it's time to progress to the final phase.

With our colours confirmed, simply transfer them back into the full-resolution pencil sketch and then prepare for the final polish. Even though the final painting may take many hours to complete, it won't be wasted time. Solving problems in the rough stage allows us to save time on the final piece. Now hunker down, pour a cup of coffee and finish the painting.

Pre-mixed colours are a great way to quickly lay out a colour scheme and speed up the entire painting process



# No Disc. No Problem

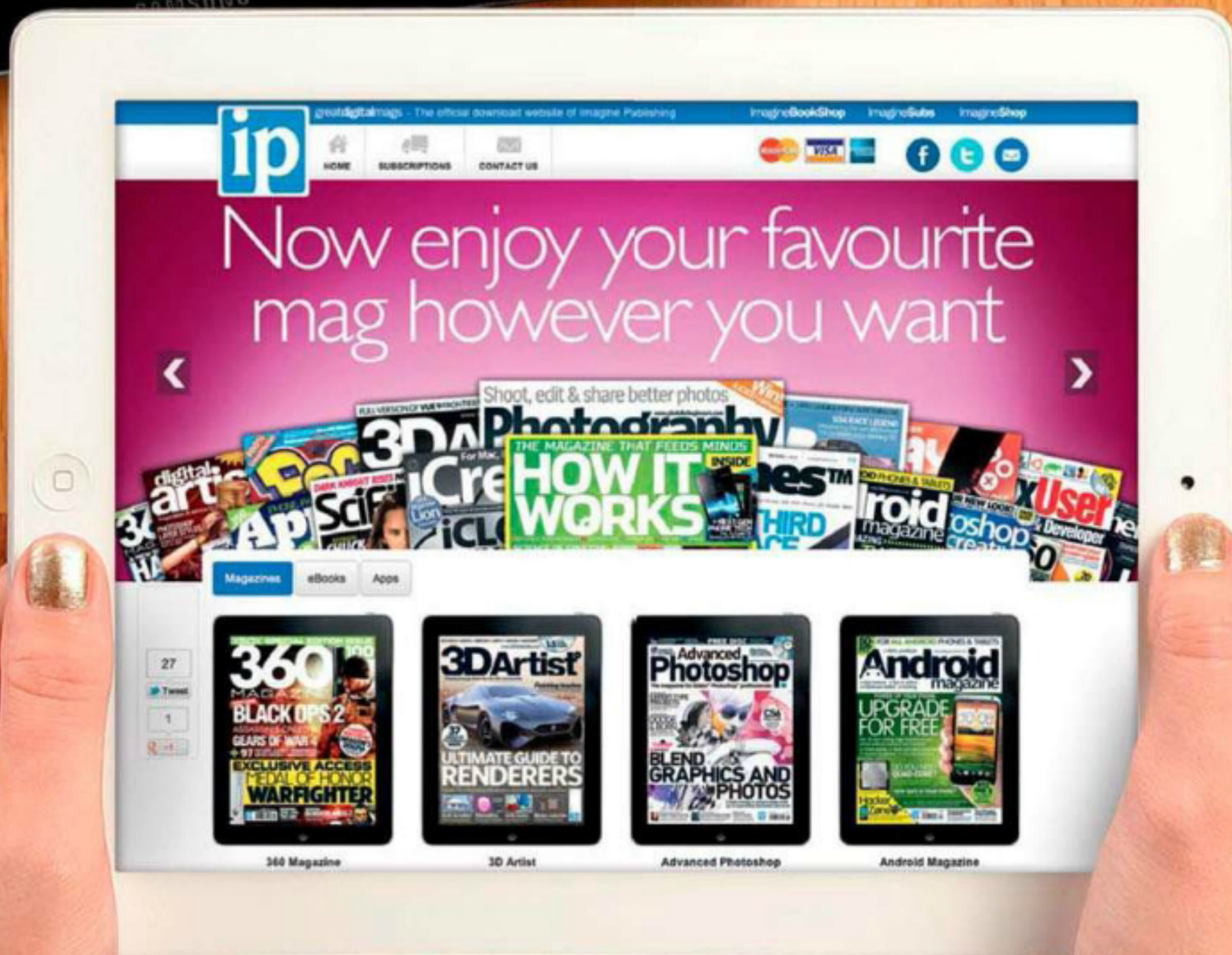
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